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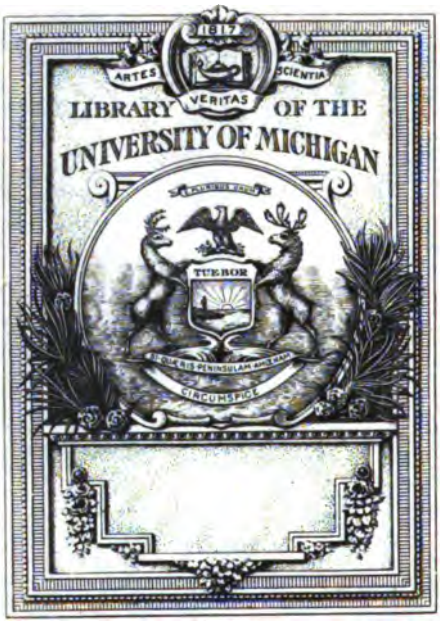

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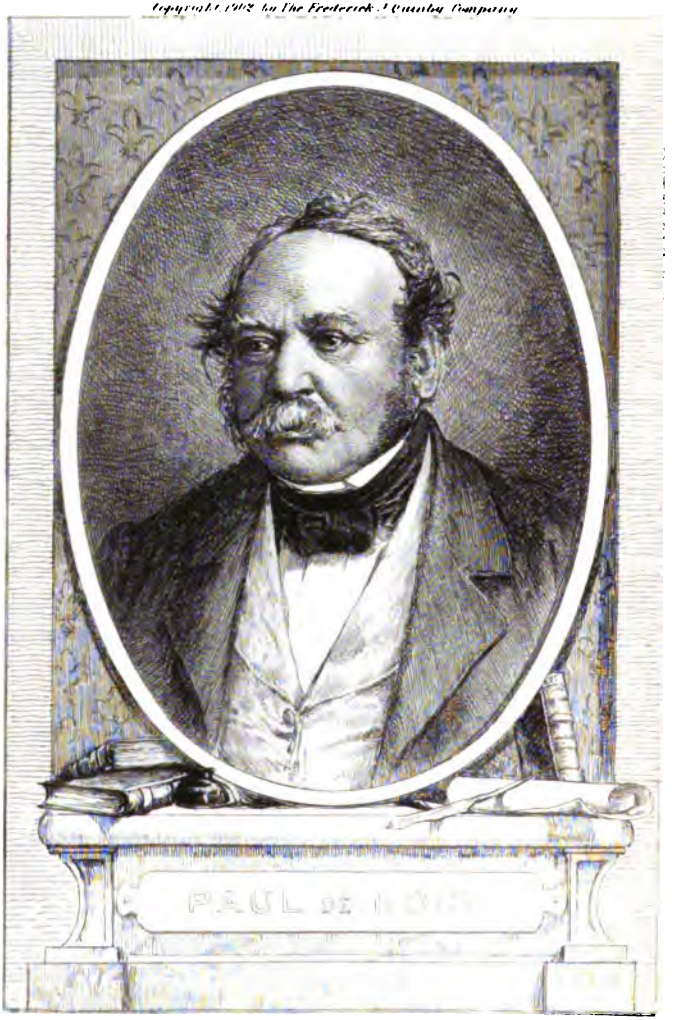

UNIV.

CHARLES-PAUL DE KOCK.

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY G. W. H. RITCHIE FROM PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN 1855

THE MEMOIRS

OF

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

EDITH MARY NORRIS

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

BOSTON LONDON PARIS

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CONTENTS

PAGE

Foreword xiv–xx

CHAPTER I

Relating to my father, Jean-Conrad de Kock.— The reasons why I am not a Republican.—From Holland to France. —A first marriage.— Five children.—Second marriage. —Ninety-three.—A birth and a death.— A banking house in Paris.— The Dutch refugees with the army of the North.—Dumouriez.—Consequences of the battle of Nerwinde.—My father and mother return to Paris.— The house at Passy.— M. Maron, Protestant minister. —Colonel Saumur.— Anacharsis Clootz.— Hébert. —Ronsin.—Arrest.— Jean-Conrad de Kock before the Revolutionary Tribunal.— Superfluous defence. —Sentenced.—On the scaffold.— Sequestration of his goods.— Consequences of the sentence of the Revolutionary Tribunal.— Text of the inventory drawn up after his death (22d Germinal, An 11).— My cradle is seized.— Citizen Antoine Ravigneau and the jewels and silver plate of a victim.—A portrait saved.— A visit from Fouquier-Tinville.— My mother threatened with imprisonment at the Abbaye Prison.— She owes her safety to me.—The 9th Thermidor 1

CHAPTER II

The day after the 9th Thermidor.— If I were a historian.— What occurred in my family.— My mother's third husband.— Head-clerk and gambler.— The Palais-Royal garden.— History of the first volume of an old

PAGE

novel.—The little old lady.— Origin of a vocation.— Why I was not sent to school.— The venerable M. Bedel.— A violin master.— M. Mengal.— The tune from the "Caliph of Bagdad."— A ball on the fifth floor.— How the good people of Paris used to amuse themselves in 1810.— The charm of meeting with strangers. 20

CHAPTER III

I lose my professor.— A child's library.— Parisian theatres from 1802 to 1805.— Napoleon I did not understand Parisian wit.— Mademoiselle Montansier. —A meeting in 1812.— Pâris the animal painter. —An episode during the famine.— About a marriage which Mademoiselle Montansier was on the point of contracting.— Barras.— General Bonaparte.— The origin of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal.— A slight grudge against the First Empire.— I wish to see the Emperor at close quarters.— Birth of the King of Rome.— A new violinist is introduced into the Court of the Tuileries.— A first book.— How I became a novelist.—"The Child of My Wife."— Bank clerk and in apprenticeship as a great man.— The first page of a first chapter.— Who Zoé was.— M. Théodore. —Writing consoles for all. 44

CHAPTER IV

Travels in search of a publisher.— Who M. Fages was. —A word about Bezou.— I tackle Pollet, the bookseller.—He rejoins "Business is bad."— Still another disappointment.— Good M. Quoy's terror.— The sort of breakfast one got for a louis in 1811.— Les Vendanges de Bourgogne.—Dorvigny, an author of the good old days.— A prince de la main gauche.— How a man of wit died aforetime.—The frankness

PAGE

of the ancients, the prudery of modern people.— Two years of pleasure and heedlessness.— What I did at twenty.— Consequences of an evening at the Tivoli. — The wife of a naval officer.— A night of love and terror.— You won't catch me there again.— A woman's glance, four years after. 67

CHAPTER V

"The Child of My Wife," still.— A bank clerk his own publisher.— From seven to eight hundred francs to be procured. — A mirage.— Twenty napoleons destined to the gaming table.— Intervention of my stepfather.— The Cercle des Étrangers.— Money won. — Money lost.— How my first novel at last saw the light of day.— Kind friends.— A halting success.— Only four dozen copies.— Should I write a second novel?—A lucky meeting.— Caigniez.—A halt at the Rocher de Cancale.— Should I become a dramatic author?—The Caveau in 1814.— The Chevalier de Piis.—Armand Gouffé.— Brazier.—Eusèbe Salverte. — De Jouy.— Désaugiers.— Théaulon.— Béranger. — Story of my first ballad: "The Wandering Knight."— A meeting with Martainville.— An improvised play.—A roll of blank paper.—A literary man's little joke.—Corsse, the millionnaire director. — What they called Napoleon in 1814. —Four melodramas in two years.— The first performance of "Madame de Valnoir."— The man who triumphed in spite of himself.— Parisians, weathercocks.— Villeneuve.—"You have come to do the same as I." 95

CHAPTER VI

A pause.— My first success.—"Georgette, or the Notary's Niece."— Madame de Saint-Phar. — Evenings in the Marais.—A garret.— How romantic situations

PAGE

arise.—Hubert, the bookseller in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal.—The first money received.—"Frere Jacques."—"My Neighbor Raymond."—At Ladvocat's House.—Châteaubriand.—"Gustave ou le mauvais sujet."—Peacock shrieks from the prudes.—A duel with a chemist.—A love adventure.—Goose, turkey or chicken.—How the adventure was fated to end.—A gallan who bolts at full speed.—Nicolas Barba.—A visit to Pigault-Lebrun.—Ladvocat again.—Charles Nodier and Zozo.—The bookseller with the truffles.—Hippolyte Souverain, the miller.—M. Alexandre Dumas fils.—Baudry.—Lachapelle.—Alexandre Cadot.—How we dined at his house.—Sartorius.—A publisher of whom I won't speak. 135

CHAPTER VII

One of the happy periods of my life.—My work for the Opéra-Comique.—"une Nuit au château."—"Le Philosophe en voyage."—"Les Infideles."—"Le Muletier."—A proposal from Merle.—One of my aversions.—What Nestor Roqueplan said to me on this subject.—A ourney to Rosny.—A visit to the château of the Duchesse de Berry.—Meeting the duchess.—The little apron.—How later, on two separate occasions, I remembered this little apron.—The greenroom of the Opéra-Comique.—Garat.—Hoffman.—The ever-youthful M. de Saint-Georges.—Boïeldieu.—Hérold.—Florist and composer.—Other guests at the soirées in the greenroom of the Opéra-Comique.—Perpignan, a censor of the departed school.—A way of knowing what is going on in Paris.—Story of Piberlo, the actor, and Mistenflute, the painter.—The little servant girl.—Cuckold, beaten, and discontented, but philosophic.—

PAGE

Perpignan's monomania.—I sacrifice my plates.—Adolphe Adam.—Les Bergers de Syracuse.—About tobacco.—Destruction of the Salle Feydeau.—A swan's song.—Theatrical managers. 172

CHAPTER VIII

I dine at the Hôtel de Ville.—Comte de Chabrol.—Casimir Delavigne.—Inception of a "scie."—"There's nothing there yet, we must get something put there."—The Revolution of 1830.—The "scie" continues.—M. de Salvandy.—Alexandre Dumas, Gerard de Nerval, etc., etc.—Dupeuty takes it up.—My patrons, in spite of myself, refuse me heir protection.—Decorations which begin at home.—A proof of the esteem in which Pope Gregory XVI deigned to hold me.—A mysterious call.—Do they want to make me a carbonaro?—They want to bestow a certain Italian order upon me.—My answer to this proposal.—Silent for thirty years.—The "scie" comes on all the stronger.—The papers, under the Empire, on August 15, and New Year's Day.—"Good old Paul de Kock."—My martyrdom.—A gentleman who has dealings with ghosts.—"Your father is decorated."—"I did it."—I ask to be made a commander.—Lambert Thiboust's heartfelt cry.—The fox too ripe for the grapes.—The best of republics.—There will never be any more fighting.—At the guardroom with Frédérick Lemaître.—Sham patrols hinder the real patrols.—I spend an evening at Lafayette's house.—What I see there.—Abbotsford.—The Romainville woods as they were formerly.—La Poule Russe and its punch.—How a woman who mended cashmere shawls became tender.—The Tournebride.—Robert, or the restaurateur who illuminates.—Rides on horseback.—I force my wife to

PAGE
take horse-exercise in spite of herself.— My repentance.—"I prefer that." 218

CHAPTER IX

House for sale.—"That won't bind you."— Monsieur and Madame Cartery.— An inspection of the little house.— My wife has an answer to everything.— Five thousand francs and the expenses.— Un de plus.—Arnal rescues us.— We have "our home."— My shrubs and my beds.— No drinking water.— My wife is frightened.— A nocturnal adventure.— The band of thieves.— I nearly commit a crime.— The Romainville ball.— Amédée de Beauplan.— Mademoiselle Plessy.— I shoot.— I shoot no more.—The Republic takes my guns.— How I worked on the grass.— The shawl.—Latet anguis in herba.— Recollections of my lawsuit.— M. de Vatisménil.— The other advocate.— My two brothers, Henri and Jean-Pierre.—A Dutch general and a French colonel.— Why it was a good thing that the colonel retired.— United.— Madame Gaigneau wishes to be called Madame de Kock.— Count d'Orsay.— A letter from Bulwer-Lytton.— I think no more of my lost lawsuit. — My philosophy.— The animals I love.— Frontin, or the talking cat. 250

CHAPTER X

A man is never satisfied.—"Raise your roof."— The house of my dreams.— And there is a billiard-table.— We enter my Abbotsford number two,— The advantage of having a wig-maker as a tenant.— Why I wear a mustache.—Sudden catastrophe.—My wife's death. —A word about Caroline and Henry, my children. —The story about Victor Hugo and the four thousand, five hundred quarts of rum.— Joy once more at

PAGE

Romainville.— I buy a wood.—My theatre.— What used to be played and how it was played.— The play, a ball and supper.—My usual guests at Romainville.— Charles Monselet comes too late.— Old age and the gout. 277

Death of Charles Paul de Kock. A note by his son, Henry de Kock. 296

Appendix. 301

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
VOLUME I

CHARLES-PAUL DE KOCK . . . . . Frontispiece
Original etching by G. W. H. Ritchie, from photograph taken in 1855.

PAGE

DE KOCK'S STUDY FOR FORTY YEARS AT 8 RUE SAINT-MARTIN 162
Original etching by John Sloan, from photograph.

CHARLES-PAUL DE KOCK, AGE SIXTY-THREE YEARS 231
Photogravure from original portrait by Bertall.

THE "LILACS," HIS HOME AT ROMAINVILLE . 278
Original etching by John Sloan, from photograph.

FOREWORD

April 8, 1869.

For a long time I have been invited to write my memoirs; for a long time past, every day, numbers of persons have repeatedly said to me: "You, who have seen so many people, so many things, why don't you describe the former to us and tell us about the latter? Endowed as you are with the gift of observation, your descriptions and your tales could certainly not fail to be of interest to us."

Up to the present I have always replied to those who urged me to undertake a work, from the perusal of which, as they assured me with more or less sincerity, they anticipated considerable pleasure,—

"No, I shall not write my memoirs, and for these reasons: first of all because I have never cared to put my own personality in evidence in a book, and because the example afforded in this respect by Jean-Jacques himself, in certain parts of his 'Confessions,' does not tempt me at all; and, secondly, because people and things that I have seen during my life, which have appeared to me capable of interesting or amusing the public,

have already done service in my novels; so that, in describing the former again, or for a second time speaking about the latter, I should only be repeating myself, and if it be true that, in love and before a good table, the maxim, 'Bis repetita placent,' is correct, it is still truer that in literature there is nothing so insupportable as those writers who, by dint of constantly sifting a certain idea or a certain character, end, after extracting from it a white and excellent flour, in obtaining nothing but a gray and insipid thirds."

That is how I replied to the publishers, to my confrères, and to such of my friends as would have me turn my thoughts towards the past with intent to enliven the present; and I should no doubt have persisted in my resolution, had it not been for a conversation that I had this very day, on the Boulevard du Temple, with an old and charming author, Benjamin Antier, a friend of Béranger's, a friend of mine as well, for many long years.

Of what did we talk, Antier and I, as we walked along this boulevard, which formerly was so gay, so lively, so eminently Parisian, with its everlasting round of theatres, and which is now so sad, and comparatively so deserted, so provincial-looking, with its barracks, and its square where so many ways meet; so large, this square, that each time that one is about to cross it, one involuntarily asks one's self if it wouldn't be advisable first to

make one's last will and testament? Of what did we talk? Of all that no longer exists in Paris, and of all that we recalled to mind as having loved or admired there. Thus our conversation was long, so long that, though we began at mid-day, evening surprised us still talking. Events and men of every description, of every kind, for sixty years and more, all were passed under review; a review which at times would cause a tear to rise in the eye, but which more often, would bring a smile to the lip. For my part I am but little disposed to sadness, and Antier is of a like mind; he prefers laughter to tears.

At length, as we were making up our minds to part, the author of "la Pauvre famille" and of "l'Auberge des Adrets"—the antipodes in style—said to me,—

"It does one good, doesn't it, Paul de Kock, to look back over the past? It makes one young again."

"My word!" replied I, "it is certain that whilst we've been chatting, I haven't suffered one pang from the gout, although since yesterday I have dreaded an attack. My left arm is as stiff and heavy as a bar of lead."

"Well, do you know, my friend," Antier resumed, "I should, were I in your place, continue to employ recollections as a remedy, since they seem to serve you so well as a preventive of your malady."

"I ask nothing better. Whenever you are willing, we will continue our conversation."

"That is not what I meant. Of course, I shall be only too happy, at some other time, to run through the pages of our youth again with you; but what I intended was, that you, as a remedy for the gout, should write down all that you have just now said to me."

"Good! So you, too, advise me to write my memoirs!"

"And why not? if, while you are writing them, you forget your suffering?"

"My dear friend, I have said somewhere or other, and with truth, I think, that if there is for us a great charm in remembrance, we are also often apt to flatter ourselves wrongfully in making this charm pass to the end of our pen, whereas it dwells only at the bottom of our hearts."

"Good! Good! I know you! You have never been engaged in politics, therefore, you won't speak of them in your memoirs, an obvious reason why your book will be successful in an age when — like Proteus, changing at his fancy his color and his form — this pretentious fiend, pedantic, tiresome and hollow, which we call politics, pursues us poor Frenchmen everywhere, and especially us poor Parisians, into the drawing-room, the shop, the street, to the theatre, and even into the servants' hall. You will not speak of religion either, because, faithful to the rule of

conduct you have imposed on yourself in your novels, you will not see the necessity, merely to please those who believe in nothing, of ridiculing those who believe everything. And vice versa. In short, you will not adopt, I am sure of it, methods of certain authors of memoirs, methods which consist in giving the most scrupulous details of private life, very interesting, perhaps, for him who recollects them, but, on the other hand, not very entertaining to those to whom they are related; your book will be lively, gay, without pretence — a genuine Paul de Kock book of the old school, and, as such, every one will want to read it and every one will read it."

I smiled as I listened to Antier.

"Why, you are almost sketching a plan for my memoirs, my dear friend," I said to him.

"Well! well, so much the better!" he retorted, gayly. "I am lightening the task for you. Begin by writing down our conversation, by way of a preface; then, taking your own time, and as you feel inclined, commit your recollections to paper; when you have sufficient to form a volume, you will take it to a publisher. . . . . The reception accorded this feeler will show you whether you should publish a second. Good-by!"

Antier had left me. On my return home, I began by dining, for it was six o'clock, and I still have the weakness, contrary to a certain publisher of my acquaintance — who purposely forgets to

dine in order to spare his purse — of loving the table and of always sitting down to it with an appetite; but, after dinner, leaning on the balcony of my window, that window under which, for well-nigh forty-eight years, I have seen so many faces pass by, faces young and old, pretty and plain — the plain more numerous than the pretty — I set myself to reflecting on the words of my old friend.

And the result of my reflections was, that I took a pen and a block of paper, and, on that very same day, April 8, 1869, I wrote the preceding "by way of a preface," as Antier had said.

And now, taking my own time and as I feel inclined, as he also expressed it, I am going to write my souvenirs, or memoirs, which I will divide into three periods: From 1793 to 1815, that is to say, from my birth under the First Republic, up to the end of the First Empire; from 1815 up to 1848, during the Restoration, the reigns of Charles X and Louis-Philippe, up to the Republic, second edition; and, lastly, from 1848 up to our own time.

Under how many governments have I lived?

I made an enumeration of them some days back, with my son; it is curious:

I was born during the reign of the National Convention (1792 to 1795).

Then I lived during the Executive Directory (1795 to 1799).

Then during the Consulary Committee (1799).

The Temporary Consulship (1799 to 1802).
The Permanent Consulship (1802 to 1804).
The Empire with Napoleon I (1804 to 1814).
A Provisional Government (1814).
Louis XVIII, First Restoration (1814 to 1815).
Napoleon I, The Hundred Days (1815).
A Provisional Government (1815).
Louis XVIII, Second Restoration (1815 to 1824).
Charles X (1824 to 1830).
Provisional Government, General Lieutenancy of the Kingdom (from July 30, 1830 to August 7, of the same year).
Louis-Philippe I (1830 to 1848).
Provisional Government, Second Republic (1848).
Executive Commission (1848).
Presidency of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1848 to 1852).
Temporary Dictatorship of Louis-Napoleon (1851).
Decennial Presidency of Louis-Napoleon (1851 to 1852).
Napoleon III, Second Empire (1852 to 1868).

There! Twenty-one governments! Leaving aside the Pompier of May 15, 1848. But one must be a little indulgent, as this Pompier was a government, I believe, for barely four hours. Twenty-one governments and a quarter! That's

not so bad, is it, for a single individual? Without reckoning that, at the rate things are going nowadays, I am not at all convinced that I shall die during the one that exists for the moment, which has had in truth for some time past, the appearance of doing all that is necessary to yield its place to another.

But what am I doing! I promised not to talk politics, and here I am at the very outset, allowing myself to be carried away by them.

Forgive me, reader, that will not happen again, or at the very most, that will happen only when I am forced into it, sadly forced, as for instance, in the very first pages of my memoirs.

It is not my fault if the Republic, which is the so-called government par excellence, and the rule that is indisputably and indubitably for the welfare and best happiness of all, did not permit me in my cradle to receive more than one kiss from my father.

Because they were waiting to lead him to the scaffold.

"J'étais là, telle chose m'advint"
LA FONTAINE

CHAPTER I

"LIKE father like son," though often quoted, is, like many oft-quoted sayings or proverbs, more often erroneous than correct. At any rate it is so in my case, for my father was a consistent and double-dyed Republican, which I most assuredly am not; and for the best and soundest of reasons, as I will explain to you. First of all, paradoxical as it appears when one considers his principles — the Republic killed my father; which is, in itself, it appears to me, so good and sufficient a reason for my resentment that it should exempt me from giving any others. But my second reason for not following my sire in his political opinions is owing to the fact that, during the course of my long existence, among some hundred families with whom I have had more or less acquaintance, there were but two or three where complete unanimity reigned, or where for a mere yes or no, when the matter in question was one of vanity or money, they were not all ready to take each other by the hair; from which I have naturally come to the conclusion

that union among an entire people is the most utopian, the most chimerical, the most unrealizable of dreams.

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"— before scribbling these three words on the walls, they should be engraved on the hearts of the people.

Unfortunately, the minds of men are not as plastic as the walls of buildings, and for a long time back envy and hatred have been taught in France instead of love and charity.

Born in Holland, in 1755, my father, Jean-Conrad de Kock, was a lawyer at the Hague. He was rich and a nobleman. I mention this fact without vanity, although I admit that I would just as soon be the son of a somebody as of a nobody, but principally to rectify the error into which Lamartine and M. Louis Blanc have fallen; the former of whom, in his "History of the Girondins," and the latter in his "History of the French Revolution" democratized my father's name too greatly and murdered it by writing it Koch or Cock. Riestal's "Universal Heraldry," which was printed and published in Gouda in 1860, records the fact that Jean-Conrad de Kock was of noble birth. Noble, then, rich and happy, he took it into his head, in 1787, to come to Paris, where revolutionary ideas were already fermenting.

I have told you that my father was one of those men who believe in "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" elsewhere than scrawled upon walls.

You shall see what his illusions cost him.

Jean-Conrad de Kock had been married ten years when he came to France. He had had five children by his first wife, Marie-Petronille Merkus; two sons, Henri and Jean-Pierre, born in Heusden, the former in 1779 and the latter in 1780, whom he brought with him to Paris; and three daughters, Goverta, Cornelie, and Deborah, whom he left under the care of one of his sisters in Holland.

Marie-Petronille Merkus died in Paris, December 31, 1789.

Jean-Conrad de Kock married his second wife, Anne-Marie Kirsberger, December 8, 1790, in Paris. She was born at Bâle in Switzerland, June 14, 1764, and was the widow of Claude Perret, by whom she had had three sons.

Of this second marriage, there were born, with an interval of two years between them, two children: First, in 1791, a girl, who only lived a few months. Second, in 1793,[1] a boy, Charles-Paul de Kock, your humble servant, reader.

In 1793 was I born, that is to say in the most dreadful days of the Terror, at a time when nobody, whether small or great, on rising in the morning was sure of going to bed in the evening with his head on his shoulders.

---

[1] There is a discrepancy as to the date of Paul de Kock's birth. His biographers are almost unanimous in declaring him to be a posthumous child, and in fixing the date of his birth on May 21, 1794 — two months after his father's death.

I was born May 21, 1793, and March 24, 1794, my father died by the guillotine.

So it must be admitted that if I am of a cheerful disposition, and if, for more than half a century, my indefatigable pen has never ceased to divert and amuse the public, I certainly do not owe it, as in the old stories, to the fairies who presided at my birth.

A stanch and unyielding patriot, my father left Holland when the wife of William V, hereditary stadtholder of the United Provinces, invoked the protection of her brother, Frederick William II, King of Prussia, against the party called the Constitutionals. On the day that thirty thousand Prussians entered Amsterdam, Conrad de Kock left it for Paris.

But in resigning himself to exile he did not abandon the hope of freeing his country, and whilst waiting till France, free herself, a Republican France, should stretch out her hand to the Batavian Republic, my father, who realized that one of the best ways of aiding one's country is to have plenty of gold to use in its service, looked about him for a means of augmenting his fortune, and on January 1, 1791, entered into partnership with one of the principal banking houses of Paris, the house of Sartorius Chockhard.

This partnership prospered, but the events which followed without intermission soon proved to my father, that in a time of Revolution it is

dangerous to wish to make money, even for the common good. In such times every rich man, however generous he may be, is regarded by the masses as a monopolist. The events of the tenth of August, 1792, which ended in the imprisonment of the royal family in the Temple — otherwise called the antechamber to the scaffold — gave my father food for serious reflection. Blood had flowed like water during this day; it was still to pour in torrents. In the face of this expectation, distressing as it was, my father did not abandon his liberal ideas; but, if he must die, he preferred that his life should be given for his own country, instead of being sacrificed uselessly for her in France.

He accordingly dissolved his partnership at the bank, and, in the beginning of 1793, betook himself, as one of the twelve members of the Batavian Committee, to Louvain, the headquarters of the army of the North, in whose ranks the Dutch refugees were united in a legion, under the command of General Daendels.

My mother insisted on accompanying my father, although at that time my advent was expected. M. de Kock was an eloquent talker, well-informed and witty, handsome and distinguished in his person; his wife was pretty and amiable, so both were accorded the warmest welcome. Dumouriez, especially, evinced the greatest liking for them. A fatal friendship, which later on was one of the

principal causes of my father's downfall and destruction.

Is it necessary to remind you of what you doubtless know as well as myself, how, after losing the battle of Nerwinde, Dumouriez, feeling himself as unable hereafter to continue his struggle against the National Convention as he had been to contend against the enemy, arrested the minister of war, Beurnonville, and the four commissioners, Camus, Lamarque, Bancal and Quinette, who had been sent by the Convention to order him to follow them to Paris, and how, deserting his army, he fled for refuge, accompanied by the Duc de Chartres, to the camp of the Prince of Coburg.

A lamentable method, by the way, of repairing a defeat — to act treacherously.

However that may be, the army of the North being vanquished and dispersed, and the liberation of Holland by France being indefinitely postponed, if not altogether frustrated, my father returned to Paris. He owned a house in Passy, and went there to live with his wife, who was on the eve of her confinement. But, as though he had a presentiment of his fate, and wished to protect from its consequences as far as possible two beings who were most dear to him, he availed himself of the offer of a relation who was starting for Belgium to send his two sons thither.

What has become of the house where I was born? It was destroyed, no doubt, burned down,

swept away with so many others during some popular movement, for, later on, under the Empire, when I went to see it, except some vestiges of the garden which my mother thought she recognized, we could find no traces of it. It was one of the simplest of habitations and little likely to excite the envy of the mob. My father used to receive his friends there, fellow-countrymen for the most part, Van Hocq, T'hoofd, Saint-Aman, Propstein, Pastor Maron, My father was a Protestant, and had me also baptized as one. Of all those who used regularly to visit him at his house in Passy, M. Maron alone survived him for any length of time. He lived till 1833, and to the last never failed to come and see me twice a year, spring and autumn, to beg my alms for the poor, in memory of my father. I need hardly say that not once did I turn a deaf ear to these appeals.

Unfortunately, those named above were not my father's only friends. He was more or less intimate with Colonel Saumur, ex-governor of Pondichery, with Anacharsis Clootz, the "orator of the human species," and partisan of the "Universal Republic," and also used to receive Hébert and Ronsin, the two leaders of the Cordelier faction. M. Maron used to say to me of Ronsin, that "he always looked like a bulldog in a fury." Hébert was a little dandy, slim and elegant, who always dressed with the greatest care, and used musk, amber and pomatum in abundance. He

was a charming man — when not writing his horrible "Père Duchesne."

Ronsin, Hébert, Saumur, Anacharsis Clootz and five or six others, wished to overthrow Robespierre, who still, at that time, was all-powerful in the Convention; but it was Robespierre who overthrew them. Arrested in their homes, on the night of March 17-18, they were taken to the Conciergerie. My father was not arrested at Passy until the next morning. Fouquier-Tinville accused him of having conspired against the government, and especially of having been the friend of a traitor, Dumouriez. He refuted these accusations before the Revolutionary Tribunal with little trouble.

"I am a Dutchman," said he, "and if, on fleeing from my oppressed country, I asked for shelter in the French Republic, it was in order to serve her, as far as lay in my power, with my intellect and with my blood, in the hope that, victorious over the coalition of the kings, she would extend to my country also the benefits of liberty, and not to meddle in her internal discussions. As to General Dumouriez, it is true that my hand has often grasped his. But at that time — can you have forgotten this? — the repeated successes of his sword had made me, no less than you, believe in his patriotism. If you must kill all those who like me have loved Dumouriez, the hero of Valmy and of Jemmapes, you will have to immolate more than thirty thousand soldiers."

But, as is well known to everyone, all defence was futile at the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The accused was allowed to speak for form's sake; the public prosecutor alone was listened to. My father was sentenced to death with all the rest of the Hébertists. He went to his death like the courageous man he was. He was executed the last but one, after Vincent and before Anacharsis Clootz. M. Maron was in the crowd and stood just opposite the scaffold. Before yielding his neck to the executioner, my father exchanged a last look with the pastor, a look which seemed to say: "I think of those I love! do not let them forget me."

Although I never had the happiness of knowing my father, I have never forgotten him. I have always remembered, and always shall remember, that he was guillotined by the Republic.

And that is the reason why I am not and never shall be a Republican. If anybody thinks me in the wrong, so much the worse for him.

Through M. Maron, also, my mother heard of my father's death, at Passy, where she remained guarded by two sans-culottes, waiting for the public prosecutor to decide her fate. My mother was obliged to pay these two guardians six francs a day each, to escape the alternative of being taken to prison. Be it noted that Fouquier-Tinville, who, for good reasons had no doubt whatever as to the issue of my father's trial, had on the day of

his arrest placed everything in our house under seal, so that had my mother not happened to have a few pieces of gold in her pocket, she would have been forced to join my father in the Conciergerie, being prevented from taking any of the money that she knew was in the house.

The National Convention, I may add, was as expeditious in carrying out its sentences, as it was in getting its dues.

On the evening of the 21st Germinal, the worthy Pastor Maron, braving the dangers to which all who ventured to show any interest in the "aristocrats" exposed themselves, came to tell my mother that she was a widow.

And, on the morning of the next day, one of the district administrators, acting in the name of the law, came to Passy, to draw up an inventory and valuation of the furniture, works of art, clothes and other effects which had belonged to the man who, two days previously, had been sent to the scaffold by the Revolutionary Tribunal.

"What, can one inherit from those whom one has murdered?" asks a poet. The French Republic had no such scruples of conscience. She pocketed with much satisfaction the proceeds of the sale of the goods of those whom she had slain.

I have before me a copy of the text of the inventory in question. I copy some pages from it, word for word, for the edification of my readers.

DEPARTMENT OF PARIS

Franciade District

Copy of the Official Inventory and valuation after the Decease of CONRADE KOCK sentenced to Death.

MUNICIPALITY OF PASSY.

Twenty-second Germinal, Year Two of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

This day, 22d Germinal, Year Two of the French Republic, one and indivisible, I, Antoine Ravigneau, administrator of the Franciade District, a commissioner appointed by the said directorate, pursuant to its order dated the 19th Germinal, to betake myself to the house in Passy of the late Conrad Koc, sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, to inspect and pass as whole and unbroken the seals previously imposed in this house by C. Gautron, Commissioner of the Department, as also to draw up an inventory and valuation of the Furniture and Effects contained in the Said House and belonging to C. Conrad Koc, did in consequence of my said Powers betake myself thither on the day and in the year mentioned above, assisted by the Citizens Pierre Harivel and François Harivel, both men of note of the Commune of Passy, as also by the Citizens Lelong, Expert Appraiser, and Douet, our secretary, who took the prescribed oath, and did then proceed to make an inventory and valuation of the furniture and effects in the following Manner:

Here follows a list of the furniture, provisions, odds and ends, and clothes, from the dining-room chairs, upholstered in crimson "Utreck" velvet, down to the "lamp in the Chinese style," and the "little Bastile under a glass globe" which adorned

my mother's bedroom; from the barrels and bottles of wine in the cellar, down to my cradle which stood beside my mother's bed, "a small Indian cradle with its curtains, a small horsehair mattress, a small counterpane"; from the carriage, saddles, bits, bridles and halters found in the stable and coach-house, to the roller-top desk and backgammon board which stood in my father's study. The inventory covers both sides of twelve closely written pages of large foolscap paper, bearing the stamp of the Commune of Paris, and the total valuation amounts to the sum of sixty-two thousand four hundred and twenty francs, a sum which, considering the minimum price at which each item or lot was valued (notably a hundred bottles of champagne, which were set down at fifty francs, that is to say at ten sous the bottle) must have been more than quadrupled at the sale.

Nor were the plate and the jewelry, weighing together sixty marks, five ounces, included in this valuation. Citizen Antoine Ravigneau, "administrator-commissioner," declares that "as to the jewels and plate, he has taken these to convey them to the Directorate of the Franciade District, that an inventory thereof may be made at the said Directorate."

O Citizen Antoine Ravigneau, are you quite sure that you conveyed these sixty marks of gold and silver whither you say? Did not a little of it stick to your fingers by the way?

All the same, the death of the Dutchman, Conrad de Kock, was good business for the Commune of Paris.

As for me, as I read over these pages, on which in dry lines, are numbered and set forth, facing the absurd valuations, all the things which the Republic stole from my parents, it is not on the items of gold and silver that my eyes tarry with regret, but rather on such things as these:

196. Two bonbon-boxes of pale tortoise-shell; a small ivory writing-stand with pen and pencil thereto; a tablet of white ivory.

197. A lacker snuff-box; a pair of English pistols.

209. A small writing-table. Thirteen small pictures, representing different portraits.

These were family portraits, miniatures painted by great contemporary artists, marvels of art, as my mother has told me. Bonbon-boxes, ivory tablets, a table, a writing-stand, a snuff-box, which my father loved to use; pistols which he had received as a present from the Duc de Chartres, in the army of the North.

My mother was successful in saving only a portrait of her unhappy husband, which she concealed on her person.

That is all that the Republic left me of my father's belongings.

Little enough.

The document ends as follows:

"And seeing that nothing more was found to be set down in this inventory and valuation, we have closed this our present protocol, after having busied ourselves from nine o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night, without interruption save and except during mealtimes, and have left as guardian of our said seals as also of the furniture and effects set down in this inventory and valuation, the Citizen Gillioz, who has taken them in charge and will produce them to us whole and intact, at such time as he may be requested by us so to do, which he did after having taken the prescribed oath and having signed with us, the above-said commissioner, this our present protocol, as have also done the Citizens Pierre Harivel and François Harivel, both notables, and the Citizens Lelong, Expert Appraiser, and Douet our secretary, the day and year given above.

RAVIGNEAU, F. HARIVEL, P. HARIVEL, GILLIOZ, LELONG and DOUET.

Beneath this is written:

Registered at Neuilly, the 23d Germinal, Year Two, fo. 51. Collection of duty deferred till after the sale.

THIBAULT.

Beneath this again:

Received, the 22d Prairial, Year Two of the Republic, thirty-six livres as fee for registering the present inventory after the sale.

THIBAULT.

So the sale only took place two months later, and for two months the generous National Convention allowed my mother to live amongst her seized goods, on the condition that she should make the least possible use of them, and, above all, not wear or deteriorate them in any way. Which must have been very comfortable for her.

Let us be fair; the Convention, through Fouquier-Tinville, did more than that for my mother, and by the same token for me, seeing that if I had been deprived of her it is more than probable that, as I was then only ten months old, I should have been somewhat embarrassed to provide myself with the means of existence.

At the beginning of Floreal, or April, that is to say about ten days after my father's execution, Fouquier-Tinville, remembering that he had not entirely finished with the case of the Dutchman "who had abetted the treachery of Dumouriez and had attempted to overthrow Robespierre," presented himself at our house in Passy, accompanied by three of his familiar bravos.

I will let my mother tell, in the words in which she often described it to me afterwards, what then happened:

"One morning I was walking in the little garden, carrying you in my arms. You were laughing, you seemed radiantly happy, because the spring sunshine was beginning to gild the budding leaves, and I, I was weeping as I looked at a rose-tree which your father had planted the previous autumn under my bedroom window, rejoicing at the thought of the perfume which its flowers would exhale for me as he did so.

"Suddenly, Genevieve, my good Baden servant, who despite all my misfortunes had insisted on remaining with me, came running up, pale as death.

"'Madame,' she stammered, 'there are four men asking to see you — O my God! and I saw at once who they were; three of them are the same who came here to fetch master.'

"Four men came out of the house as she spoke, and walked towards me.

"Genevieve had not been mistaken. Three of them had been among those who arrested your father.

"The fourth, who came first, oh, I recognized him immediately, although I had only seen him once or twice in Paris — the fourth was the Public Accuser — Fouquier-Tinville.

"Fouquier-Tinville, at that time, might have been about fifty. He was a thin man of medium height and was simply dressed, but with a certain degree of elegance. He took off his hat as he came up, his companions following his example, and said, in a polite tone, which contrasted with the vile address in the second person singular which was obligatory at that period,—

"'Citizeness, our visit, I presume, surprises thee disagreeably. But, I am sorry to say, thou must understand that it is impossible that thou should'st longer remain here. Thy husband has been tried and sentenced. Thou also in thy turn must appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal. And, in the meanwhile, we are compelled to conduct thee to the Abbaye.'

"To the Abbaye. I knew where one went on

leaving the Abbaye! My tongue clave to my palate.

"However, I managed to answer,—

"'And why should I go before the Revolutionary Tribunal? What have I done to be sent to prison? — I, a woman? What am I accused of? Is it not enough that they have killed my husband? Why should they kill me also?'

"Fouquer-Tinville, unruffled as ever, was about to retort, when somebody stopped him.

"That somebody was you, my Paul, my well-beloved son.

"Astonished, I daresay, at the sight of these strange faces, astonished rather than frightened, just as the terrible purveyor to Republican justice was about to open his lips to tell me, probably, that, as the wife of a man guillotined the day before I could with but ill grace refuse to admit that it was equitable that I should be guillotined on the day following, you burst into one of those peals of infantine laughter, the delicious expression of a joy the secret of which is known to God alone.

"I trembled, I tried to hush you. I was afraid that your gayety might displease these men.

"But, smiling as he looked at you, Fouquier-Tinville said,—

"'Is that thy child, citizeness?'

"'Yes, citizen.'

"'How old is he?"

"'Ten months.'

"'He is a strong child for his age. Where is his nurse?'

"'I give him the breast myself.'

"'Ah, it's thou — Ah, it's thou who —'

"Having thus repeated these words twice, Fouquier-Tinville looked at us both for a few seconds in silence. My tears rolled down my cheeks. They seemed to say, 'If you send me to the scaffold, what will become of my child?' You, continued to laugh. Blessed laughter!

"'Well, then,' said the Public Accuser, suddenly addressing his companions, 'since the Citizeness Kock is nursing her child, I don't see that there is any harm in leaving her here a little while longer. Let us say until her child is weaned.'

"'But,' objected one of the men, 'everything in this house has been seized in the name of the law.'

"'Well, and what then?' said Fouquier-Tinville. 'The citizeness will buy back her bed and her son's cradle, that's all. If she has no money, she is pretty enough to find somebody to lend her some. So that's settled, citizeness. Thou shalt remain here five or six months. That will give thee time to wean thy child. Salut et fraternité!'

"And Fouquier-Tinville departed, followed by his acolytes. He walked away rapidly, perhaps to avoid hearing my thanks. The Public Accuser could listen to no word of thanks, because he had no right to show mercy.

"Still, I fell on my knees after Fouquier-Tinville and his men had gone, thanking God and kissing you with all my might, my Paul. For it is to you alone that I owe my life."

It is certain that for a young man of ten months I had not conducted myself so badly under the circumstances. What do you think of it? While still in long clothes I had saved my mother's life. I can find, even in ancient history, few cases of filial affection which are comparable in precocity.

For my mother did not go to the Abbaye and, as a natural consequence, to the scaffold. That which a touch of humanity in a tiger's heart had begun was achieved by the course of events. Fouquier-Tinville had authorized my mother to live for five or six months in Passy, but the third month in the Republican year, which followed Floreal, was Thermidor, and on the 9th Thermidor, as everybody knows, the fall of Robespierre and his party marked the last day of the Terror, and my mother had no longer any reason to fear that they would come and bid her prepare for death because I had reached an age at which my existence no longer depended upon hers.

CHAPTER II

HAD I followed another path in literature, were I, instead of a novelist, what is called a serious writer — that is to say, a writer whose mission it is to relate historical events, facts, and to comment upon them, with more or less talent and more or less impartiality, according to his literary merit and his personal opinions,— it would be easy for me, by utilizing to this end the scenes actually witnessed by a score of people whom I knew in my youth, and who had had excellent opportunities for noting and remembering many very interesting facts — to give my readers at least a score of pages on the events which, in Paris and throughout the whole of France, followed close on the 9th Thermidor.

Very sad events they were. The Reign of Terror was over, but France, while binding up her wounds and breathing more freely, was not swimming in that ocean of happiness and prosperity which the Revolution had promised her. France had no bread. The rain of blood had not made the wheat sprout. And you know the old proverb, "When there is no hay in the manger, the horses fight." So, lacking bread, people grumbled

in Paris from morning till night, demanding the Constitution of 1793, shouting, yelling and fighting in the streets. Now and again they hung some aristocrat, who was powerless to help matters, to a lamp post.

Poor people, they ought to have learned from thousands on thousands of proofs that it is not by killing that the best living is earned.

So, were I a historian I should write you a history, or something like one; but I am only a novelist relating his souvenirs, and I will accordingly draw a curtain over the political events of the end of the National Convention, of the Directoire, and the Consulate, and with one stroke of the pen, jumping from 1794 to 1806, from the Republic to the First Empire, will describe how, at the age of thirteen, I felt the first aspirations to literary fame awaken in my breast.

At thirteen! There was precocity! But I have already shown you that I did not wait to be old before distinguishing myself.

Let me first give some particulars about my family. They are essential.

In 1806, my mother had for seven years been called Madame Gaigneau in place of Madame de Kock. Yes, she had married for the third time. Oh, my mother, like the heroine of one of my novels, was a bold and determined woman in the good acceptation of the word; that is to say, a woman of strong will and great intelligence. Having

mourned my father for five years, my mother said to herself one day, as she noticed how I was growing, that it was not on tears that she could bring me up. One of her brothers, Joseph Kirsberger, was a tradesman in Geneva; to him she had entrusted the three sons of her first marriage, before marrying M. de Kock, in 1796, and he loved them like a father. Joseph Kirsberger was rich, and from time to time sent his sister some money. But it is difficult for a woman with a child to live on "some money from time to time." The Republic had confiscated all M. de Kock's possessions in France, and as to the property which he had left in Holland, it was quite natural that this should benefit his first children, his two sons and three daughters, who had returned to their native land, rather than me.

I shall speak later on of my half-brothers on my father's side, Henri and Jean-Pierre, who returned to Holland in 1793, and were adopted as her children by the Batavian Republic, for, till their death, I remained on terms of affection with them. As to my half-brothers on my mother's side, I shall say nothing, as I never saw them and, in fact, hardly ever heard a word about them. Silence for silence.

My mother, then, remarried in 1799. She espoused M. Gaigneau, head clerk in the Revenue office. M. Gaigneau was entirely dependent on his salary, but he was well-educated and amiable

in disposition. In point of age he was well suited to my mother, he being forty and she thirty-five when they married. Unfortunately, my dear stepfather had one of those faults which are fatally opposed to easy circumstances in a family. He was as great a gambler as Beverley.

Good M. Gaigneau, how many times of an evening, when my mother thought that he was innocently employed in walking with me on the boulevards, has he left me, all alone, waiting for him for hours under the big chestnut-trees planted by Cardinal Richelieu in the Palais-Royal garden, whilst he was throwing his gold on the roulette-tables at number 113, or number 154. He died in 1826, and shortly before he closed his eyes forever, he said to me,—

"Never mind, old fellow, since I have been ill in bed I have discovered a wonderful system. You shall see. I must get well quickly, that I may win plenty of money for all of us."

I must admit that I did not at all mind waiting for my stepfather in the Palais-Royal garden. I used to play with little boys of my own age; I used to listen to the music at the door of the Café des Aveugles, or to the man playing on the tambourine at the Café du Sauvage; I used to stroll along the wooden galleries and stare with curious eyes at the women who, whether the weather was cold or warm, walked there, always fresh, pink and smiling, with crimped hair covered with wide caps

gauffered in great plaits, with their loose waists, their little jackets and their hoops. When M. Gaigneau had won — I could always tell it from his face — he used to treat me at the Café de Foy, or at the Café des Mille Colonnes; but when he had lost we returned home straight as a bullet.

On these latter occasions, he never failed to say to me, as we were walking along,—

"You needn't say anything about it to your mother."

I understood what he meant, namely, that he had left me alone for three hours.

A recommendation to which I always hastened to answer,—

"No, no, don't be frightened, papa, I shan't tell mamma anything."

When he had won, and, in consequence, had treated me to an ice or to a glass of bavaroise, at one of the cafés, he never said this. He had paid for my silence, and so had nothing to fear from my chatter.

But, on one of these evenings, a summer evening, as the night was closing in and my stepfather had just entered one of his favorite hells, I was wandering about the garden looking for some acquaintances with whom I could have a game of leap-frog, when I saw under a chair at the foot of a tree a small book in chamois-leather binding, which I hastily picked up and opened.

It was the first volume of:

THE THREE GIL-BLAS

OR

FIVE YEARS OF MADNESS.

HISTORY FOR SOME, A NOVEL FOR OTHERS.

THE WHOLE SET FORTH AFTER THE MANUSCRIPT OF ONE OF THE THREE FRIENDS, AND PUBLISHED BY

LAMARTELIÈRE.

As I bought, later on, while book hunting, a copy of this book, now rare enough, and placed it in my library as a souvenir, it is easy for me to give here at full length the titles and sub-titles.

My attention was first attracted by a steel engraving which formed the frontispiece of the volume. The engraving represented three young men in their underclothes, who were dancing round a pile of open moneybags which were heaped on the floor. Underneath was the following explanatory legend.

"He makes us dance in our shirts round a heap of money."

What were the three Gil-Blas? (No doubt, the three young men who were dancing.) And where had they got this pile of money which seemed to delight them so?

Such, we will understand, were my first thoughts as I examined this picture. At the same time, before I ventured to begin to read the book, I

looked all round to see if I could not find the owner, and restore it to him.

There was nobody. So I sat down on a bench and began to devour the contents. I read on until it was quite dark, and went on reading in my bedroom after I got home, until I had finished the book, without saying anything about it to my mother or my stepfather. Instinctively, I felt that it was not a book for little boys. How disappointed I was to find that this volume was only a part of a book. "End of Vol. I" was printed on page 281. So there was a second volume, perhaps a third and fourth. I should never know the adventures of Charles, Frederic and Henri, the three Gil-Blas. I had left them as they were fleeing from Strasburg after a sanguinary duel with three insolent officers of the garrison, and I should never know what became of them! I could not sleep for regret that night.

However, I was fortunate enough to read the whole of "The Three Gil-Blas."

The next day, on the pretext of taking me for a walk on the boulevards, my stepfather had as usual taken me to the Palais-Royal, and had left me in the garden whilst he went off to court the red or the black.

I had brought the volume that I might read it, and for a second and more virtuous motive, to restore it to its owner if by chance I should meet him.

But it happened that the owner, a little old lady, was sitting at the very place in the chestnut walk where the day before she lost the first volume of Lamartelière's novel. She was reading the second volume. I had but to look at the color of the binding to see that.

I rushed up to her and, holding out my find, I cried,—

"This is your book, madame, is it not?"

The little old lady looked up, and, evidently very pleased, exclaimed,—

"Ah! my little friend. So you have found my book."

"Yes, madame; yesterday evening."

"And you have brought it back to me. It is very good of you. Many thanks. Now what can I offer you for your trouble? Sweets? A toy? We'll go and buy you something."

The little old lady had risen as she spoke, but I did not budge. She was surprised, and said,—

"Well, won't you come? Don't you want a box of sugar plums, or a cup and ball, or a hoop?"

I shook my head.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I should like you to lend me the continuation of your book, madame."

"The continuation. Do you mean to say that you have read the first volume?"

"Oh, yes, madame, I read every word of it, and I thought it very amusing."

"You don't say so."

The little old lady smiled, but she seemed to hesitate about acceding to my request. She probably thought that such a book was hardly suitable for a boy of my age.

It would be, however, a mistake to imagine that the story of "The Three Gil-Blas" deserved to be classed in the category of those licentious publications which appeared in such abundance under the Directoire. Although it contains some light episodes, it is on the whole as moral as it is interesting, a fact which has been admitted by our dramatic authors, who have taken from it the materials for half-a-dozen plays, as for instance, "Le Siege du clocher," which was successfully given at the Ambigu; "Fiorella," played at the Opéra-Comique and "Le Triolet bleu," at the Palais-Royal.

But to return to my little old lady. She had no doubt come to the conclusion that there was no reason to fear that that "lightness," which had at first alarmed her on my account, would do me any harm, for the reason that I probably did not understand it, and that what had diverted me in the book had evidently been the combats, the jumps out of window, the climbing of chimneys, the pranks of all kinds of the three Gil-Blas, and not their gallant adventures.

In short, she offered me the volume she had in her hand, and said,—

"All right, little fellow. Here is the continuation. Sit down by me and read it."

"But you, madame?"

"Oh, I've plenty of time. I'll read the paper."

"And does the book finish with this second volume?"

"No, there are two more."

"And you will lend me them also?"

"Certainly. But won't you be scolded for reading instead of playing. You are not here alone, surely?"

"Yes, madame. That is, it's just as if I were alone because — my papa brings me here — in the evenings — but as soon as we are here, he goes off — to his business — and only fetches me away later."

"Well, well."

Did she understand what sort of business it was which occupied my father so regularly in the Palais-Royal and took him away from me, and was it that which dissipated the last scruples of her conscience? A gambler's child! There was no need to practise too strict morality with him. Be that as it may, the little old lady let me read the second volume of "The Three Gil-Blas" in peace, and, true to her word, brought me, on the following days, the two last volumes, which I devoured as greedily as the first.

Now did this reading have a real influence on my mind? Did it really fix my vocation? I think

so, for from that day I, who up to that time had been rather indifferent on this subject, could never see a book without immediately desiring to read it. We had some classical novels at home, "Don Quixote," "Le Diable boiteux," "Gil-Blas," the genuine Gil-Blas, and I gave my parents no rest until they lent them to me. To please me, my stepfather also procured for me the works of Ducray-Duminil and of Madame Cottin. Did I not tremble as I read "Victor ou l'Enfant de le fôret" and "Coelina ou l'Enfant du mystère"? Did I not weep over "Malvina" and "Amélie de Mansfield?" But tears and trembling were less to my taste than laughter. "The Three Gil-Blas" had hit the mark, the gay, natural style of book was my favorite style. With what joy, then, did I, three years later, read Pigault-Lebrun's "Les Barons de Felsheim." Lamartelière had pointed out the way, Pigault traced it for me. It has been said that I imitated him in my first and weakest novel, "The Child of My Wife," and that is quite true. And what writer is there whose first work is not an imitation of his favorite author? Since then, I can say with pride, I have always been myself; let the reader judge for himself. Pigault wrote from imagination, I wrote from Nature. He invented — as for me, I never told anything but what I had seen.

Well, Lamartelière and Pigault-Lebrun assisting, I wrote two volumes at one heat at seven-

teen, which, with one accord, all the publishers in Paris refused to print.

But I must not anticipate. I have first to speak of the early days of my youth.

Between ourselves, they were not always very cheerful. I have told you that my stepfather was a gambler, which means that all his earnings melted away at trente-et-quarante and at the roulette table. This naturally provoked my mother to outbursts of passion. Oh, when he happened to win, all went well. There was abundance of everything at home; we drank the best wines, we had the finest dinners, and we went to the theatres. My mother was very fond of the play, and often took me there. But, when, at the end of the month, the time for the payment of salaries, and of tradesmen's bills also, M. Gaigneau came home with empty pockets, the house used to ring with cries which would drive a deaf man out of his wits.

"You would like my son and me to die in the straw, I suppose, sir."

"Don't get angry, dear. I had no luck today, but tomorrow —"

"Tomorrow! The wretch! He hasn't a halfpenny left, and yet he talks of going back to the tables!"

"But I must get my money back, by Jove! I can't always be unlucky."

"My poor Paul, my darling child, it's on your account that my heart's breaking. Oh, how ill-

advised I was to give you this man as a second father. What will become of you, Paul, since this gentleman, who ought to guide you and protect you, who ought to think of nothing but your happiness and your future, does nothing but waste his time in gambling. As for me, Paul, I feel it, I shall not be able to live this life of privation and misery much longer. My health is declining day by day. Rejoice, sir, soon I shall not be here to reproach you for your misconduct. You will have brought me to the grave — to the grave to which my unhappy child will soon follow me — for want of bread."

M. Gaigneau did not bring my mother to the grave. He died in 1826, and she did not close her eyes in death till 1854, at the age of ninety. A fine old age, which seems to prove, whatever my mother, widow of three husbands, might have said on the subject, that sorrows do not injure the health. As to that I must say that my stepfather was but slightly impressed by the sad picture of his prospective widowhood which his wife drew for him. Not that he was a bad man, or that he had no affection for her, but one becomes indifferent in all things, and perhaps my mother laid on the colors rather too thickly in her efforts to move the culprit. When she had finished her exordiums he used to shrug his shoulders and murmur,—

"What a fuss about the loss of a few crowns!

But what the devil! I shall get them back to-morrow. A little run of luck is all that is necessary."

Then he would kiss me and say,—

"Don't you worry, my boy. You have only got potatoes to eat today; tomorrow I'll treat you to truffles."

My education necessarily suffered somewhat from the lack of accord between my mother and her third husband, and especially from the almost constant straits in the household, resulting from the latter's passion for gambling. When I had attained my seventh year, my stepfather, in spite of my mother's objections, for she thought me too young to be separated from her, took me to a little school in the vicinity, where I was assured of good treatment, During the first week all went well. I liked going to school, where I found little mates to laugh and play with. But on the ninth day, whilst playing, I got a bump on the forehead which swelled up as big and as red as an Easter egg, in spite of all the salt-water bandages and five-franc pieces which the master applied to it. When I was brought home by the servant, and my mother saw me in this state, she was transformed from a woman into a raging lioness.

"I knew what would happen," she roared. "It shows that one wants to kill a child of that age when one sends it to school. My darling son!

They would kill you, the brigands, the murderers! But you shan't go back; no, you shan't go back to that accursed school. Do you hear me, sir?" (This was addressed to M. Gaigneau.) "This boy is my son, and I am opposed to his being killed. And so he shall not leave me again."

"All right. But, then, who is going to teach him to read and write?"

"Oh, that's dreadfully difficult, isn't it? We'll get a tutor to come to the house, that's all."

A tutor at home would be more expensive than sending me to school, and M. Gaigneau, not from motives of economy but as a matter of prudence, did not care to incur too many expenses. However, for the sake of quiet, one day, when the night before he had been lucky at the tables, he hunted up a suitable tutor and brought him home, having, prudently again, paid him three months in advance. He was forty or forty-five, and his name was Bedel. He was as gentle as a sheep, and resembled that animal to some slight extent in his physiognomy, and I think also in its more than modest amount of intelligence.

"Sir," said my mother to him at the outset, "I do not intend that you shall treat my son very harshly."

"Madame," he answered, "it is neither according to my disposition nor my principles to ill-treat my pupils."

"I adore my son, sir. I could not suffer any-

one to inflict the slightest corporal punishment upon him, on any pretence whatever."

"I have the honor to repeat to you, madame, that I never allow myself to administer to the children whose education is entrusted to me even the merest fillip of the fingers."

"I have also to ask you, sir, not to push my son in his studies. He has a delicate constitution, and I fear the consequences of overworking him."

"My system, as a professor, accords in all points with your maternal solicitude: 'Chi va piano va sano,' such is my rule of conduct. That should satisfy you that I have no intention of overworking Master Paul."

And M. Bedel certainly did not overwork me. He led me on so gently that when I was eight years old I barely knew how to read. But was it the poor man's fault? I will wager that out of every eight days there were seven on which I did no lessons. Either I was ill and it would have tired me to work, or my mother was going out and required that I should accompany her. And then there were intermittances in the tutor's pay, when the family finances were at an ebb. There were times when hundreds of lessons had not been paid for. He continued to teach me, because, no doubt, he had not too many pupils, and because his kindness as a master, added to his patience as a creditor, had established him on the footing of a friend. He was only paid occasionally, but they

often kept him to dinner; so that there was some kind of a set-off. All the same it is not to be wondered at that, under these circumstances, my education was anything but satisfactory. When I was fourteen years old, M. Gaigneau, who, roulette aside, was a sensible man, spoke of sending me to a grammar school; but at the first word which he ventured on this subject my mother exploded like a bomb. A public school! Ah, she had not forgotten what happened to her darling boy, when he had only been a week at school. He had been brought back to her dying. Never, never, would she consent to sending her son to a public school. And what reason was there for sending him to a public school? Did he not learn as well at home with his parents? Was not M. Bedel as capable an instructor as any they could find.

M. Gaigneau might have had a good deal to say on this head, but my mother continued,—

"And besides, sir, you talk of public schools, of boarding schools, and so on. You are joking I suppose. To send a boy to a grammar or boarding-school costs money. And how will you pay the heavy bills for my son's education in one of these establishments when you can't even pay regularly a poor little twopenny tutor?"

This was true, and my father seemed to see it, for he said no more on the subject. I remained the pupil of a man whom my mother, with an ap-

preciation which was truer than she herself, perhaps, imagined it to be, had described as a "two-penny tutor." And so if, later on in my life, serious critics, too serious critics, have learnedly enunciated, after dissecting some of my novels, the fact that these novels emanated from the pen of a man who had not even the elements of the humanities, it costs me nothing to admit that these gentlemen are quite in the right. I humbly confess that I shall never translate Horace as did Jules Janin, or Homer like Madame Dacier. I shall not even try to do so. As to my style, if people have found it negligent, I can only say that having, in most of my works, taken my characters from among the lower classes of society, I should have esteemed it awkward on my part to make them speak like Academicians; and, finally, as concerning the faults of grammar of which I am accused, I will remark that having heard, hundreds of times over, that even the greatest writers err in this respect, I don't think it at all surprising that I, who am only a popular novelist, should have sometimes deserved this reproach.

In conclusion, for I did not set out to write in defence of my books here, which would bore you as much as it would bore me, but to indite my memoirs, I will say one last word. Such as I am, as a writer, I have been accepted, I have been read, I am still very much read, and I fancy that

I shall be read for a long time to come, were it only by people anxious to read of a period already so far behind us and so different from that in which we are now living, and by people who want to laugh. To laugh! This is a kind of pleasure which to my way of thinking can hardly be procured by reading the novels of today.

Well, such as I am, and without bearing the least rancor — I swear it — against those delicate wits who have called me "the cook's novelist" (which in view of the number of editions and translations of my books would prove that there are a terrible number of cooks in the world); such as I am, I am satisfied with myself and with others, and only hope that my colleagues may be able to say the same when they reach my age. So you see that my seventy-six years have not spoiled my temper.

If I worked badly as M. Bedel's pupil, I made up for it by working hard as the pupil of M. Mengal. Who was M. Mengal? He was my music-master. My mother desiring that I should learn music, my stepfather, who was very intimate with M. Mengal, first cornet-player at the Théâtre Feydeau, and at the same time a talented violinist, had begged him to give me some violin lessons, as a friend. Had I possessed no talent for music, M. Mengal would, no doubt, have tired very soon of teaching me as a friend; that is, for nothing. As it was, I was very fond of music

and learned easily; my rapid progress rewarded M. Mengal's care, and in the end I had the satisfaction of rewarding him in a more substantial manner, by giving him the libretti of two comic operas to set to music. These were "une Nuit au Château" and "les Infidèles," both of which were successful.

So I learned the violin and, when I was fifteen, I could play it well enough to take part in a quartet; but, what pleased me above all was to play for others to dance. I was intimate with a young man of my own age, called Lepère, who played the flageolet, and at least once a week, for three or four years, Lepère and I formed an orchestra, to the delight of innumerable dancing parties. Lepère used to play out of tune. The dear boy's passion for the flageolet was an unhappy one for his audiences. But as he played loud and long, people were not too critical. We were received with open arms wherever we went, and laden with glasses of punch, cakes, and compliments.

One evening, however, at the house of one of the colleagues of M. Gaigneau, a clerk in the Revenue Office like my stepfather, the cakes were so hard, the punch so weak, and the compliments so few, that, towards midnight, drawing Lepère aside, I said to him,—

"It's very dull here. I'm going, will you come with me?"

"Hang it, if you go, I shan't stay here alone."

Lepère pouted. He did not like to give his flageolet a rest so early in the evening. But without my violin his flageolet was nothing but a rose-tree without its support, an ivy-plant with no tree to cling to; and so his flageolet followed my violin.

We left the house where our talents had been so meanly requited, and were walking towards the Rue du Temple, at the corner of the boulevard, opposite the Jardins de Paphos, where I was then living with my mother and stepfather, and which was near to the house where my friend lived. It was in the autumn, the autumn of 1810; the night was bright and warm, and as I walked along, with my violin-case in my hand, over the pavement of the dark and deserted city, I tried to cheer Lepère with my conversation and to bring a smile to his lips.

Suddenly, as we were walking down a small street, we heard the sounds of a piano, of dancing feet and of peals of laughter. We looked up and saw, on the fifth floor, two windows lighted up and wide open, and through these windows reflected on the houses opposite the shadows of people who were dancing like wild men. We paused.

"That's something like it," I said. "They seem to be enjoying themselves here, at any rate."

"Yes," said Lepère, with a sigh, "they're dancing one of the quadrilles which we play best of any, 'The Caliph of Bagdad,' our triumph."

"But what an orchestra. You can't call it a piano, it's a kettle. I've an idea, Lepère."

"Well, what is it?"

"Supposing we accompany this kettle."

"What? Here, in the street? You are mad! We should get ourselves arrested by the patrol."

"Bah, the patrol is a great way off."

I had got my violin already fixed under my chin. Lepère did not resist, the flageolet rose to his mouth. One, two, three—off we go. We cut into the "Caliph of Bagdad" quadrille just as the old spinnet was in full swing; it was not in the same key, but it was all the same to us. At the sound of our music, as melodious as it was unexpected, the dancers stopped their capers and their leg shakings and rushed to the windows. They applauded us, they cheered us, they shouted to us,—

"Won't you come up? Do come up?"

"Shall we go up?" I say to Lepère.

"What, to people we don't know?"

"What of that. They are people who dance. It is certain that they are not coiners!"

I do not know, I have never known, who these people were; but what I do affirm is that that night was one of the gayest I ever spent in my life. For Lepère and I went up to the ball on the fifth floor. Even if we had not wanted to go up, we should have been forced to do so, as a band of strong young fellows, about half a dozen of them, came pelting down the stairs to fetch us,

and would have carried us up by main force. We went up and played our prettiest quadrilles, to the satisfaction of all, and danced ourselves, and when we had danced, we supped, at three o'clock in the morning. There was a supper, a supper for which no dainties were provided. As far as I can remember, the pieces de resistance consisted of a cold leg of mutton and a small ham. But at sixteen a ham and a leg of mutton are as good as a truffled turkey at fifty. And then, all these people, petty clerks, I fancy, with a mixture of workmen, were all so good-humored and bright. There were such hearty faces amongst the men and such pretty ones amongst the women.

In short, it was five o'clock in the morning after a last quadrille, the stirrup-cup quadrille, that the party broke up, and Lepère and I could get away. We were overwhelmed with thanks, bruised from shaking hands, and obliged in parting to solemnly promise that we would come to the next ball.

But as I have said I never knew who these people were, nor what the house was where I played for others to dance, and danced myself and supped. And Lepère knew as little about it as I. In inviting us to come to his next ball, the master of the house had forgotten to ask our names or to give us his. Perhaps it was because we were all rather excited when we parted, for the mutton and the ham had been washed down with copious

draughts. However that may be, as we did not even remember the name of the street where the ball had been given, it will be easily understood that it would have been difficult to pay our host another visit, or even a polite call.

Was that to be regretted? Who knows? On the first occasion, we liked and were liked by these unknown people. Perhaps if we had gone again we might have been bored, perhaps our hosts might have come to blows with us. We never saw our friends of one night again. It was all the better so. There are many such pleasures, which are agreeable only when taken once, and without reflection.

CHAPTER III

Good Monsieur Bedel, my easy-going and kind inductor into the devious paths of learning, left Paris, temporarily as he supposed, towards the middle of the year 1808, to visit Auvergne, where he was called by family affairs, and my studies were of necessity interrupted. I should have resumed them on my tutor's return, but the honest man never came back, for the most obvious reason; he was stricken with inflammation of the lungs and died at Clermont-Ferrand. My mother, on learning this sad news, decided that I was sufficiently advanced to pursue my studies for the future without a master, and this dictum went into effect forthwith.

I really believe, on looking back, that I worked better for being left to myself. With my trifling weekly allowance of pocket-money, I had acquired a small collection of books, and in this nucleus of a library Molière had the place of honor. Oh, Molière! I never wearied of reading him. I knew him almost by heart. I also admired Racine and especially his "Plaideurs." I had, even in these early days, given my preference to the Muse of Comedy — "Cuique suum," you know. And as I

read and re-read this laughable play, the thought occurred to me, as it must have occurred to others also, that it was surprising that, having thus proved himself such a master of comedy, Racine should have persisted in devoting himself to tragedy. Certainly "Phèdre" and "Britannicus" are splendid works, but what a pity it is that their author never wrote a companion piece to his "Plaideurs." Another book, the reading of which also delighted me immensely — perhaps I shall surprise you in saying so — was "Plutarch's Lives of Illustrious Men." Can you imagine Paul de Kock reading Plutarch? For what purpose? In what way did it help him? Well, if it only taught me that, supposing he could return today to this earth, he would have great difficulty in adding even one volume to his "Lives," you must, at any rate, concede that it availed me something.

During the day, from noon till five o'clock, I worked at my translations and prose compositions, which were corrected by M. Gaigneau, when he had the time to do so. In the morning I practised on the violin, and after dinner, except when I went to a party or to the theatre, I used to read my favorite authors.

I have said that my mother was very fond of the theatre. We often went there together, my mother and I, my stepfather being obliged — so he told us — to go back to his office in the evenings three times a week. My mother liked the

play as a play, and had no special preference for any particular style of dramatic entertainment. I make a mistake. She had no liking for grand opera and preferred the Opéra-Comique. But seats at the Opéra-Comique were expensive, and so we used generally to patronize the theatres where melodramas and vaudevilles were played. Thus I remember perfectly that, as a mere child, I saw, from 1802 to 1805, the first performances of Caigniez's "Jugement de Salomon" at the Ambigu-Comique; "l'Enfant prodigue," by Cuvelier and Hapdé, at the Porte Saint-Martin; "la Lampe merveilleuse," by Ribié and Hapdé, and Martainville's "Roderic et Cunégonde" at the Gaîté; Désaugier's "le Quartier d'hiver ou les Métamorphoses" at the Jeunes-Artistes; "Robert-le-Bossu ou les Trois Sœurs," by Madame Montenclos, at the Variétés-Amusantes; "les Quatre fils Aymon et la Fille Hussard," pantomimes with combats and equestrian and other feats, at the Franconi Brother's Circus in the Rue Mont-Thabor, and "le Demoisel et la Bergerette, ou la Femme vindicative," at the Théâtre de la Cité.

So far as I can remember, the auditorium of the Théâtre de la Cité, situated opposite the Palais de Justice, was a horrible place, small, dark, dirty and smoky. So that when, in 1807, this theatre, with seven or eight others, was suppressed by the Emperor's orders, it was but little regretted.

However, I still ask why Napoleon, who hesitated so little about sacrificing the lives of his subjects for his own aggrandizement and glory, should have felt it necessary to restrict their pleasures. What harm could he see in the fact that Paris had numerous theatres? since, in spite of the constant diminution of the population — by reason of the continual wars — they were always crowded. But Napoleon I was well and truly the uncle of Napoleon III. I say this without bitterness. He had not a Parisian spirit.

The first, by caprice, wiped out a dozen theatres with a stroke of the pen; the second, under pretence of beautifying the capital, sent half a dozen theatres packing to set themselves up again here and there as they could. "You are a goldsmith, M. Josse," will be said to me. I admit it. Both as an author and as a spectator, I sigh as I think of my dear Boulevard du Crime, such as I had seen it for so many years, with all its theatre doors open, side by side. I am a goldsmith, yes, but, then, M. Haussmann must be an Alsatian.

It was at this Théâtre de la Cité that I had the good fortune to shudder for the first time at the yells of Tautin, the celebrated traitor. I used to split my sides with laughing over Brunet and Tiercelin at the Variétés-Amusantes. The Variétés-Amusantes used also to be called the Variétes-Montansier. This theatre had been built on the

site of the Beaujolais puppet-show by Mademoiselle Montansier, out of her own pocket, but was sent packing in 1806, because people used to enjoy the fun there so much that the Comédie-Française suffered from the competition. Driven from the right, Mademoiselle Montansier sought a refuge on the left, and built a new theatre, out of the remnant of a once considerable fortune, on a site which was in the neighborhood of the one she had just left. She gave her name to this theatre. At first, like the old Théâtre de Beaujolais, it was only licensed for marionettes. The Variétés-Montansier is the theatre known today as the Théâtre du Palais-Royal. Under the Second Republic, as the word "royal" shocked democratic ears, the theatre was again called by the name of its founder. That, however, only lasted a very short time. People soon got tired of making themselves ridiculous for so little.

I had not the pleasure of her acquaintance, but I have often seen Mademoiselle Montansier in my youth, and the first time I met her, she produced a great impression on me. That was in 1812. I was walking in the galleries of the Palais-Royal, formerly known as the Palais du Tribunat, with a painter, a friend of mine, called Pâris, who died recently, poor and forgotten; he, who, had he only known how to push himself, would have been classed among our famous animal painters. Pâris was seven years my senior. He

combined the heartiest good-humor with much native wit; he was, moreover, a keen observer, never forgot anything that he had seen or heard, and could tell it in the most amusing way. I remember, among others, an anecdote of his about the famine in 1795, which is worth repeating.

Pâris was the fifth child of a small stationer in the Rue Saint-Denis. It is difficult to feed five children, two daughters and three sons, in a time of famine, when one's means are narrow; and the table was not laid every day in March and April, 1795, at that stationer's house, and the less so because, to crown his misfortune, his wife had fallen ill, which prevented the unhappy man from going every day, as was the custom at that delightful period, to wait for hours outside a baker's shop for his rations of bread.

Under these circumstances, one of Papa Pâris's daughters, the youngest, Marthe, a girl of thirteen, sacrificed herself for the common good. As to the elder sister, she would not have ventured into the crowd for her weight in cakes. Marthe was not afraid, and braving the fatigue of a long wait in the street, and what was worse, the coarse jokes and rudeness of the mob, used to accomplish her task and return triumphant, loaded with bread, to the paternal roof. However, whilst waiting in line, she had noticed that, by special favor, which evidenced that the people of Paris, in spite of the pangs of hunger, had some good

feeling left, women who were in an interesting condition were allowed to pass first into the baker's shop. What does our little girl do the next day? She takes a large pillow, and putting it to a use which can be guessed, goes to ask her father for the money for the bread. The father, astonished at her extraordinary size, asked her what it meant. Marthe immediately explained with the greatest coolness: "Since women in an interesting condition go in first by favor, I have put myself in an interesting condition. It's simple enough." And simple enough it was, to be sure; but, nevertheless, the stationer refused to allow her to carry out her plan, although he laughed till the tears came into his eyes at the girl's stratagem in ingenuously dishonoring herself so as to get the family bread quicker.

"She could not understand, the dear little woman," Pâris told me, "why father made her remove her pillow. 'But I should save at least two hours, like this, papa,' she kept repeating, 'let me go like this. I shall get back so much sooner to take care of mamma.'"

The mother herself had to speak quite angrily to Miss Marthe before she would consent to become slim again. Three years later, when she was sixteen years old, the girl used to blush up to the roots of her hair when any one recalled this incident to her. She was wrong to blush. The story was all to the credit of her childish simpli-

city and goodness of heart. There are many things in the book called "Morality in Action" which are perhaps outwardly more chaste, but at bottom are not more moral than this act of hers.

But we are far from my first meeting, in 1812, with Mademoiselle Montansier. Let me get back to it.

I was, then, walking in the Palais-Royal, with Pâris, when a little old woman passed before us, a woman so old, so decrepit, so wrinkled, so shrivelled, and, into the bargain, so grotesquely attired — a canary-colored gown, buskin-boots, a very "loud" cashmere shawl over her shoulders, and a kind of turban on her head — that, at first sight, I believed I saw the fairy Carabosse, save that Carabosse is reputed the most wicked among all her fairy sisters, whilst the little old lady aforesaid looked mild and kind.

"Don't you know that lady?" said Pâris.

"No, who is it?"

"Mademoiselle Montansier."

"You don't say so. The theatre manageress?"

"Yes, she has been manageress of a number of theatres in succession, beginning with the theatre at Versailles, the destiny of which was confided to her by Queen Marie-Antoinette. Oh! she has made millions of money in the business. So Barras had planned that a certain general, in whose welfare he took an interest, should marry Mademoiselle Montansier."

"Who was that general?"

Pâris leaned forward and whispered in my ear. It was not safe to speak too loud in a public place in Paris under M. Fouché's police.

"That general's name was Bonaparte."

I burst out laughing.

"What nonsense? Napoleon marrying la Montansier!"

"Hush! You mustn't shout out things like that. It is fair to say that the general in question did not rise to the bait, golden as it was. But people say that despite her sixty summers, the Montansier smiled on Barras's dream. The little chap Bonaparte had quite won her heart. Well, as you know, this marriage did not take place. Bonaparte did better than to marry a millionnaire; he married France."

Pâris spoke these last words in his ordinary tone of voice. He no longer minded being overheard by a police spy.

He continued,—

"As to the Montansier, who had already buried one husband, it is affirmed that three years ago she secretly married Forioso, a rope dancer, who is employed in dissipating what remains of her millions. She lives just opposite, there on the second floor, under the arcades of the Café de Chartrês, which used to belong to her. And, as after all she has never done any harm, but on the contrary has done a great deal of good, let us hope that,

in spite of Forioso, when she dies, it will be on a featherbed, and not in a garret on a heap of straw."

Pâris's wish was realized. The Montansier was poor, but not destitute, when she died, towards 1820, in her apartment in the Palais-Royal.

In the previous pages I blamed Napoleon I for his abuse of authority in regard to the pleasures of the Parisians. I did not mean thereby to imply that I do not recognize him to be a man of genius; an opinion which I force nobody to share, at a time when, in a spirit of opposition towards the nephew, people are trying to prove that the uncle, that great legislator, that glorious captain, who turned two-thirds of Europe into French provinces, was nothing but a sort of bandit and idiot combined, whose memory ought to be buried in mud. Those who write such things are dangerous lunatics, and those who applaud them and hawk them about are pitiful simpletons. Is the future of which these gentlemen so fondly dream so brilliant that they dare thus to spit upon the past?

But I verily believe that, forgetting the principles of my whole lifetime, both as a writer and a man, I have allowed myself to be drawn into talking politics. I am influenced by bad examples. One hears nothing but politics nowadays, on every side. It is enough to make one idiotic. There had been a forced halt on this ground for some

fifteen years past, but they have now reopened the political arena. So much the worse, say I.

On the other hand, this that I am writing is not a novel, but my memoirs, and so I may be allowed occasionally to say what I think of what I have seen, and of what I see.

To return to Napoleon I. I admit that I bore him a slight grudge; first, because in 1807 he had ordered the suppression of a number of innocent little theatres where I used to amuse myself, and secondly, in 1813, for having constrained my step-father to pay for two substitutes for the army for me, one after the other. The first having been so awkward as to get himself killed at Lützen I was forced to provide another, as the authorities said that his substitution availed me nothing. Fortunately for me, M. Gaigneau had received a small legacy that year, but for which, for want of money, I should have been forced to serve. This would hardly have suited me, for Bellona's laurels were by no means my ideal.

But I can pride myself on one thing with reference to the first emperor of the French, and the same applies to the various sovereigns who succeeded him, that I did not give him the slightest ass's kick after he fell, any more than I wrote the smallest poem in his praise whilst he was reigning. At the same time, in 1811, some time before I became liable to the conscription, and accordingly felt a bit sore — with the prospect of

having to don a uniform — against the man who, on account of his furious consumption of human flesh, used to be called the ogre in not a few houses, I got a violent longing to see Napoleon at close quarters, at the closest quarters possible.

The year 1811 was, according to history, one of the most glorious and prosperous of Napoleon's reign. France was at that time at peace with almost all the powers; the Emperor, who, for reasons of state, had separated himself the year before from his good Josephine to marry Marie-Louise, had then paternal reasons for congratulating himself on this coup d'état. A son had been born to him. Everything was rose-colored in the vastest of possible empires. Who could have thought then that Napoleon II would not succeed to Napoleon I.

Paris was radiantly happy for months after the birth of the King of Rome. It was radiantly happy, chiefly because it saw in this child a pledge of peace. Now patriotic joy is contagious, and so it happened that I, who till then had never had any wish to look, face to face, at the sun, came to have no dearer wish than to see Napoleon.

I told Mengal, my violin master, of this desire, and, one evening in the month of July, he said to me,—

"You wish to see the Emperor. I can find a way for you to do so. There is to be a concert the day after tomorrow, during the daytime, at the

Tuileries, in the Cour de l'Horloge. I am going to this concert, and I will take you with me."

"With you? But what right have I to go?"

"As a violinist, of course. But as you can't play the pieces which are going to be performed, you will only pretend to play. The bandmaster is a friend of mine, and as I have told him what is up, he won't say anything to you."

It was on the seventh or eighth of July, 1811. Why was a concert given at the Tuileries on that day? I do not remember. Perhaps it was to celebrate Marie-Louise's convalescence — she had been kept to her bed for a long time after her confinement — or the first tooth of the imperial child. Be that as it may, while pretending to scrape my violin I got a good look at the Emperor, and even at the Empress, for she appeared at her husband's side on the balcony. The imperial couple were both in state toilet. Behind them was a crowd of princes, marshals and great ladies glittering with gold and diamonds. Marie-Louise I thought handsome, but Napoleon seemed to me yellow, fat, puffy, with his head wedged in between his shoulders. He did not look the hero I had expected to see. I had expected a demigod, and I saw a fat man. He withdrew at the end of the concert, after making a gesture of thanks, of which self-respect induced me to appropriate a share. Hang it, if I had not played, I had not been paid either. I had neglected my occupations to get

a peep at him, and that was well worth an act of politeness on his part.

It was in this same year, 1811, that I wrote my first novel, "The Child of My Wife," that luckless child which I had such difficulty in starting in the world — where, I must add, he never shone. But if I am to tell this episode properly I must go back three years.

It was six months after the departure and death of M. Bedel, my French and Latin master. According to the maternal decision, I was pursuing my studies as best I could alone.

One evening I was at the house of one of our friends, where I had gone with my parents. After a game of reversi, and a piece on the violin, which I had executed to the general satisfaction, a tall, meagre, angular man — whom I remember as if he stood before me — said to M. Gaigneau, after greatly complimenting me on my talent,—

"So you intend to bring up this young man as a musician. You want to make an artist of him?"

"Oh, only as an amateur," my mother replied. "My husband and I are not rich enough to wait till my son can earn money as a composer, and I don't want him to give lessons or be a musician in a theatre."

"Ha, ha!" said the tall gentleman. "If that is so, I don't see what is to prevent your son, madame, from employing his time more profita-

bly than in scraping the catgut strings. How old are you, my friend?"

"I shall soon be fifteen," I said.

"Very well. Now we are just seeking for our house young clerks of good education, in whom we could place some confidence."

"And what is your business, please?" asked my mother.

"Madame, I am head-cashier at Messieurs Scherer & Finguerlin, the bankers. My name is Mathieu Delavarde, at your service."

My stepfather made a slight grimace. He doubted whether the employment offered would suit me. He had guessed my inclinations, the dear man. But his grimace sealed my fate in a manner opposed to its meaning. My mother saw it, and turning graciously to M. Mathieu Delavarde, she said with a smile,—

"Sir, my husband and I both thank you infinitely for your kind offer, both for my son and for ourselves, and we will take it into immediate consideration. Should we accept it, what should we have to do, sir?"

"Why M. Gaigneau has but to bring Paul to my office one of these mornings, that's all."

"Thank you, sir."

I am sorry to say it, for I have always loved the fair sex and shall, I hope, love it as long as I live, finding women's society far more agreeable, for every possible reason, than that of men;

but women have one terrible defect, contradictoriness. Contradictoriness is their essence. God has so made them. Look at Eve. Adam was afraid of touching the apple, Eve would taste it at all costs. Had my father acccepted M. Delavarde's offer at the outset, I am quite sure that my mother would have rejected it with all her vigor, but as he appeared to think little of it, she jumped at it.

When we got home that evening, she said to me,—

"You have heard what was said, my boy, by that gentleman, who is head-cashier in the bank of Scherer & Finguerlin. It rests with you whether you enter this office or not. What do you say about it?"

"Mon Dieu, mamma, all I can say is that if you wish me to do so, I will go into this office."

"Yes, certainly I do wish it, my dear. You have reached an age when you ought to be seriously at work, and there is no finer career than that of a banker, and a man doesn't lower himself by going into a business of that sort. Look at your father."

M. Gaigneau shook his head.

"M. de Kock," he said, "was a banker. That is a very different thing from being a bank-clerk."

"And what of that, monsieur? What is to prevent my son's becoming a banker one day like his father?"

"What is to prevent him? What is to —?"

"Of course, I know that with capital of your providing he will not be able to set up in business. Well, he will do without you, monsieur, and that will make little difference to him, for he has long accustomed himself not to count on you. He is intelligent and honest, he will work hard, and he will be successful. And, in my old age, at least, thanks to my son, I shan't be reduced to run after a twenty-franc piece, as I now am six days out of every seven. So you will have the kindness, monsieur, to take my son tomorrow morning to M. Delavarde's office."

"Very well, very well; as you please, my dear."

A bank-clerk! I was condemned to add up rows of figures from morning till evening. Figures, which, in my opinion, are the most dismal things in the world. Have you noticed that men who have to follow this special occupation all seem, more or less, to be haunted, out of their business hours, by a dream, like Père Sournois in the "Petites Danaïdes." Ah, that is because there is no such a thing as a laugh in connection with addition. So much and so much make so much. It must come out so much, if it does not, it is you who are to blame. Your totals don't agree with the running accounts, your balance sheet is not correct. Seek, seek again, seek till you have discovered where your error lies.

I passed five years with the house of Scherer & Finguerlin, from October, 1808, till Decem-

ber, 1813. And it would seem that my employers were not too dissatisfied with me, seeing that when I left them I was earning two hundred francs a month, which was a very good salary at that time. Does that mean that I was an excellent employee? No. I had too many things in my mind ever to become such. But although I had no taste for my work, I discharged my duties with care and punctuality. I prided myself on never incurring any reproach. Besides, I was pleased to earn some money which enabled me gradually to add to my library, to buy myself clothes which pleased me, to go in the evenings to the theatre, and on Sundays to go for excursions with my friends and my sweethearts. For, towards 1811, I began to have girlish acquaintances, the sort of friends one has at eighteen, friends with whom one is far more disposed to exchange kisses than philosophical reflections. And this will not, I suppose, surprise you, for you did not expect me to tell you that I patiently waited until I had attained my majority before falling in love. As a matter of fact, it was one of my first love-affairs which prompted me indirectly to write my first novel, for the simple reason that she adored novels. She was a grisette, an artificial flower-maker in the Rue Saint-Martin. Seventeen. Pretty? Well, no; piquant rather, with her snub nose, and eyes which looked as if they had been bored with a gimlet. But so gay, so fond of laughing,

that the only books she cared for were books which made her laugh, which shows that she had very good taste. On Sundays, when the unpleasant weather prevented us from going to the Saint-Gervais meadows or to the wood at Romainville, we used to shut ourselves up all day in her little room and read Pigault-Lebrun.

One day, however, Zoé was forced to go on a journey, a long journey. She had at Coulommiers an aunt who was ill and required her attendance. For how long a time would she be absent? A month or six weeks. Oh! should it be a year, her heart would be mine and mine would be hers. We swore it on a copy of "Monsieur Botte."

What can be done, whilst awaiting the return of a sweetheart to whom one has vowed fidelity? Previous to her departure, I had been tempted, on five or six different occasions, after reading some successful book, to try to write a small chef-d'œuvre myself.

I had even written out the scenario of a book with this object in view. It was a scenario of thirty lines, I have never made them longer than that. Well, the opportunity was a good one. I was forced to keep quiet for a whole month, I would employ this month in a work which would win me Zoé's congratulations on her return. I had three or four quires of good paper; I chose the whitest, the smoothest; I trimmed six quills in advance and — and forward! —

CHAPTER I

A Journey. An Accident. Adventures

"Ah, we shall never get to Strasburg this evening, Mullern; do tell the postilion to lash his sorry steeds."

"I have already told him to do so twenty times during the past hour, Colonel, and he has answered that unless we wish to break all three of our necks we cannot go any faster."

"Henri will have left Strasburg by the time we reach there."

"Then, Colonel, we must follow him."

"And perhaps we shall not come up with him in time to prevent the misfortune which I fear."

"Should that happen, Colonel, you will have nothing with which to reproach yourself, for truly, during the last six weeks we have done nothing but post day and night from Framberg to Strasburg, from Strasburg to Paris, and from Paris back to Framberg."

"If we can but attain the object of our journey!"

"If I only had a bottle of good wine to dispel the numbness of my limbs; but we can get nothing; not even a glass of thin wine to appease the thirst which consumes me. O Colonel, only for your sake would I endure patiently so much discomfort."

"Are you sorry that you came with me, Mullern?"

"I would go to the end of the world with you, Colonel; but I should wish, at least, not to do so without eating or drinking."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a tremendous shock, which broke the axle-tree of the post-chaise, and Colonel Framberg and his travelling companion both rolled into a ditch which bordered the road. This accident was due to the fact that the postilion had not, owing to the rapidity of his course, noticed the ditch into which our travellers had fallen.

Well, there is no dilly-dallying about that opening, which is that of "The Child of My Wife," if you please. There is no descriptive

explanation; it dashes into action at once. A colonel and his faithful hussar, the honest Mullern, who discuss their business as they drive along in a post-chaise, the axle-tree which breaks, the travellers who roll into the ditch, at no distance of course from a house, where they are received with open arms, and where all sorts of adventures happen to them. It was in this wise that one began a novel sixty years ago, taking the bull by the horns. Nowadays the bull does not appear until the second or third chapter. Each age has its style; as for me, I still prefer that of 1811.

In one month I had written the two volumes of "The Child of My Wife." I made it two volumes because that would cost less to print than a book of three volumes and, consequently, would prove more seductive to a publisher. But, before taking "The Child of My Wife" to a publisher I could not resist the pleasure of showing the manuscript to my mother and stepfather, and the joy of saying to them: "I wrote this myself, and if you are willing that I should read you a few chapters I ask nothing better."

And then there was Zoé, who would soon be back. Her aunt must be either dead or cured. What a thing this love for glory is. I had been for a whole month so absorbed in the production of my novel, night after night, that I had barely found time to go twice or thrice to ask the porter at her house if he had any news of my sweetheart. Oh!

how proud my little Zoé would be of me when she learned that I too was an author.

Alas — and this was the first of the series of disappointments and worries resulting from "The Child of My Wife" — to my proposition that I should read to her from a work which I had written all by myself, which I had evolved from my imagination, my mother answered: "Pooh, your romance, a pretty thing indeed! Some rhapsody, I suppose; you had much better try to obtain advancement in your office than to write such foolish things."

My stepfather was more amiable. He took my manuscript and promised to glance at it in the evening before going to bed. But he was always so tired on going to bed, honest man. He had laid my "Child" on the table by his bedside, and left it there without touching it for a whole week. The dust began to yellow it, so I resumed my property and my stepfather did not even notice that I had done so.

As to Zoé — alas, that was "the most unkindest cut of all." After an absence of six weeks, Zoé returned from Coulommiers. Her aunt was well again, but, at her aunt's house, down there, Zoé had made the acquaintance of a cousin, a fine young fellow of twenty-five, who, being desirous of seeing the metropolis, had thought it a good plan to save hotel expenses by putting up at his cousin's dwelling.

Now Zoé's dwelling consisted of one room only; it was impossible for me to deceive myself as to the situation. "Theodore" (that was the cousin's name) "won't be staying in Paris long," she said. "Wait until he's gone and then we will see each other again. You know, one's first duty is to one's relations."

The perfidious minx! I had my "Child" in my pocket. I had brought it for her. I did not read her a single sheet of it.

Bah, since my family and my sweetheart refused to encourage my first steps in literature, I would do without the encouragements of family and sweetheart. My book should be printed; it would be very successful; the newspapers would speak of it; the lending-libraries would fight for it, and my revenge should be to carry copies of "The Child of My Wife" to an indifferent mother and an inconstant mistress, and to say to the one, "You did not believe in me," and to the other, "You were faithless, but it's all the same to me; despite you, I have a name, I am a celebrated novelist."

CHAPTER IV

THE first step is taken unconsciously. This saying, which has been applied to many things, applies also with great force and exactitude to one's first visit to a publisher; it is only the second one that costs. Ignorant as I was that the path of literature, flowery though it may appear to an outsider, is strewn with thorns for the unknown and impecunious author, I was thoroughly convinced that I had but to offer my book to a publisher for him to reply,—

"Why, yes, I'll publish it with pleasure. So you have written a novel. Let me have it!"

Two volumes only, you can readily understand how I reasoned it out, could not cost so very much to print, and I was not asking for any royalties. On the publication of my second volume it would be time enough to talk about royalties. For, of course, I could not go on enriching a publisher all my lifetime without gaining a little for my self also. But my first book, oh! my first book should be his for nothing. Should he sell ten thousand copies — and why shouldn't he? — so much the better for him.

Oh, day dreams of the budding author! The

name of the publisher to whom I had determined to confide the birth of "The Child of My Wife" was Fages. He lived on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, opposite the Rue de Lancry. He published a great many theatrical pieces, and I had bought them all, and we had thus struck up an acquaintance. I never missed going to see M. Fages on my way home from my office in the evening. We used to talk about literary matters. That evening it was with an almost solemn air that I marched into the publisher's shop, my manuscript under my arm.

"Ah, M. de Kock. And how are you this evening?"

"Very well, M. Fages, and if you can spare the time, I should be glad of a few words with you in private."

"All right, all right — Madame Fages, I say, Madame Fages, be good enough to look after the shop for about five minutes whilst I talk with M. de Kock."

Madame Fages, a tall woman — as tall as her husband was short, very amiable, also very smiling, too smiling, indeed, as she had only two teeth, one on the right and one on the left, which rather marred the beauty of her smile — Madame Fages, I say, had taken her seat behind the counter, and I was with M. Fages in the back shop.

"How can I serve you, my dear M. de Kock?"

"In this way, M. Fages, I have written a novel."

"Oh, indeed."

"A novel in two volumes. It is very bright and very amusing, in the style of Pigault-Lebrun —'The Child of My Wife,' not a bad title, is it?"

"No, the title is droll."

"Is it not? Well, I've brought you my novel, M. Fages."

"You've brought it to me! What do you want me to do with it?"

"What do I want you to do with it? Why, publish it, of course."

"Publish it! Oh, that's quite out of my line, M. de Kock; I publish plays, and I am not at all sure that the speculation is a good one. I am not a rich man, and I can't pay two or three hundred francs for a piece, like Barba of the Palais-Royal."

"I don't ask for any royalties. We can talk about that when you publish my second book, if my first has sold well."

"As for that, my young friend, there's not a publisher who pays an author for his first book; it is not that consideration which stops me."

"Then what prevents you?"

"Why! the cost of printing it, hang it, and the cost of the paper. It costs a good deal more to get out a novel than a play."

"Nonsense. Two small volumes. Such small volumes."

"If they're so small, they can't be volumes."

"Oh, they're big enough for — What I mean to say is — You see —"

"Well, I'm sorry for it, M. de Kock, but I can't be your man."

"But won't you read my 'Child' before refusing it altogether?"

"No. I don't doubt that your 'Child' is as you say, very lively, very amusing, but, as I told you before, I have made it a rule not to publish novels. You're not the first who has asked me to do so."

"Then you reject them — like this — without even reading them? Supposing somebody brought you a masterpiece tomorrow, a 'Nouvelle Héloise,' a 'Manon Lescaut'?"

"I should equally refuse it. Mon Dieu, yes. What would you have one do? Needs must, when one is poor. Write plays, melodramas, vaudevilles, and get them acted, and I'll very willingly print them. But novels — but you must excuse me, my dear M. de Kock, I think I hear my wife calling me. When she's alone in the shop, my wife, she loses her head."

"M. Fages?"

"M. de Kock?"

"One last word. As you seem to have made up your mind not to publish novels I won't insist any further, but can you not at least advise me? Tell me with which of your fellow publishers I should have the most chance —"

"Go and see Barba."

"Oh, Pigault-Lebrun's publisher. I should never dare to go to him."

"Humph! It is certain that if your book is in Pigault's style, Barba would hardly care for it. Well, go and see Dentu,[1] or Pigoreau. Stay — you won't lose anything by trying. Go to the Rue du Temple and see a man called Pollet, who has just set up in business. I hear that he intends to publish novels as well as plays."

"Good! Pollet, Rue du Temple?"

"Yes, opposite the Rue Chapon."

"Thanks, and good-by."

On leaving I shook hands with Fages, as usual, but without warmth. "What an ass this fellow is," thought I, "who, on the pretence that he only publishes vaudevilles and melodramas, admits that were the most charming novel offered to him, he would refuse even to read it. And then he complains that he doesn't make money. Ah, when I write for the stage, he may be very sure that I shall never give him any to print, never."

And, as a matter of fact, later on, when I began to write plays, I did not let Fages have them to print. I bore him a grudge. He noticed this, for he spoke of it to his successor, Bezou, a friend of Barba's, with whom I afterwards arranged for the publication of several of my vaudevilles. An amiable fellow, by the way, was this Bezou, and

[1] The grandfather of the actual publisher (P. de K.).

I sometimes invited him to my table. He was a cheerful talker and fond of good living. It was necessary to take one's time when dining with him. He had lost his teeth when he was a young man, and, at dinner, when a slice of mutton or roast beef was put on his plate, he used to take out his watch and lay it on the table and say, "It will take me half an hour, you know, to get through this, and I mustn't be expected to talk, either." Barba, whose jokes were not always in the best taste, would say to him: "You made a bad bargain, Bezou, in buying Fages' business." "How's that?" "Why, because you should have stipulated in the agreement for his wife's two teeth, over and above the business. Supposing each tooth had saved you five minutes at dinner, just think what a lot you would have gained in slices of mutton."

But to return to "The Child of My Wife," which I carried as quickly as possible to M. Pollet, bookseller in the Rue du Temple, the very same evening, after leaving M. Fages. But I walked no longer with head erect. A first check had robbed me of my courage and left me timid, frightened, stammering.

Yes, it was quite true that M. Pollet intended to publish novels — one of these days. He hadn't quite made up his mind yet. Business was so bad. (I have never heard tradesmen say anything else, and I can't help wondering how business can have

survived at all, seeing how bad it has been ever since I can remember.) However, if I liked to leave my manuscript, perhaps, when he had read it —"

M. Pollet had not finished his sentence before my "Child" had passed from my pocket into his hands.

"And when shall I come back to hear — "

"In a week."

"Very well. Today's Tuesday. I'll come tomorrow week."

"All right."

Well and good, he would read it at least. He was not like M. Fages.

How long the week seemed to me, while waiting, to be sure. Would he print it? Would he reject it? These two questions haunted me even in my dreams, prevented me from eating and working, and plunged me alternately into the depths of despair, or raised me to the height of joy. Would he print it? Would he not print it?

He did not print it.

"It's not bad," he told me, "but it's not good either. It's a feeble imitation of Pigault-Lebrun. Something original — something even moderately original, would be better for us both. Imitations of Pigault abound. Improve your style, which is weak, think out your plots and study your characters, and we may yet do business together."

I never did business with M. Pollet, any more

than with M. Fages, although ten years later he began to publish novels. He was the first publisher of Balzac, who was then writing under the names of Horace de Saint-Aubin, Lord R'hône and de Villerglé, and Victor Ducange. I never approached him again, not because I was offended with him for the opinion he had passed on my first book, an opinion which on reflection I could not but accept as equitable, but because I knew that he was connected with several different authors and I did not suppose it possible that he could find time for me.

As to my "Child" I think I have told you enough of its bad reception at the hands of the publishers, which was followed by a still worse reception at the hands of the public — when it was at last printed at my expense. When I say that I visited from fifteen to twenty different publishers, I do not exaggerate; I even went and offered it to the lending libraries. There was a man called Quoy, who kept a reading-room and lending-library on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, near the theatre of that name, who had shown some interest in me. One day, in an access of rage, I thrust "The Child of My Wife" at Quoy's throat.

"But I am not a publisher."

"You will publish it. An edition of 'The Child of My Wife' or your life."

"So be it, kill me, monsieur, I am ready to die."

Quoy had fallen at my knees. For a moment I was dizzy — my manuscript, suspended above his head, threatened him.

Happily, a customer entered the shop,—

"'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' if you please?"

Ann Radcliffe had saved Quoy, and, trembling still at the thought of the crime I had been about to commit, I went home and threw my "Child" to the bottom of a cupboard, exclaiming,—

"Go, then, pariah. Since none will have you, go, sleep in darkness and in dust."

It slept there two years. I regret that it had not slept there forever.

In the autumn of this year, 1811, so fatal to my literary hopes, I met, by chance, a man whose name — almost entirely forgotten today — was as famous as that of the most celebrated dramatic writers during the last twenty years of the eighteenth century.

I was dressing on Sunday morning, when Pâris, the painter of whom I have already spoken and with whom I had recently become intimate, came into my room. He was accompanied by another young man, called Maricot, a miniature painter, who, later on, became one of my most intimate friends.

They had come to take me out to breakfast. The day before — joyous surprise — Maricot had sold a portrait and had got twenty francs more for it than he had expected to get. We were

going to gobble up these twenty francs. We were going to have a "spread." Do not laugh; in 1811 one could have a breakfast for twenty francs in a restaurant. Of course one did not get pearls dissolved in vinegar, like Cleopatra, but, all the same, three people could breakfast on twenty francs then as well as nowadays for sixty.

There was at that time in the Faubourg du Temple, on the left as one went up the boulevard, just where later the Saint-Martin's Canal was constructed, a small restaurant called "Les Vendanges de Bourgogne." Under the same name it became later one of the most prosperous cafés in Paris, nearly all the club-dinners and wedding-feasts of the shopkeeping classes being celebrated there. After shining with great brilliance — as happens to so many nations, men and things — its light was suddenly eclipsed. "Sic transit gloria mundi."

It was, then, to Legrand's restaurant, "Les Vendanges de Bourgogne," that Maricot took us. It was a fine morning, our table was laid in the garden, and as we had come early, before the rush of customers, we were served quickly and well.

We had swallowed our oysters. Happy time, when there were oysters for all, just as nowadays there are newspapers for all. We were beginning to tackle the kidneys when an old man, with dirty white hair and a nose the color of a beet-root, suddenly appeared in the entrance to our arbor,

and apostrophized us in a raucous voice, as follows,—

"Well done, young men. Celebrate Comus and Bacchus. Nothing in this world is real but their pleasures. As to the rest, Fame, Fortune, Love, bah!—they're not worth a straw. Eat and drink. But if you want to be good fellows, give me a glass of white wine. I am fond of white wine; and I haven't a sou this morning to buy myself a glass of it. Just fancy! To answer to the name of Dorvigny, to be thirsty, and not to have a sou!"

We had all been on the point of ejecting this singular mendicant, but when we learned his name we were delighted. Dorvigny, it was Dorvigny who stood before us! Dorvigny, the author of the "Desespoir de Jocrisse," of "Janot ou les Battus paient l'amende," of "Blaise le Hargneux," of "Tu et des Toi," and of so many other pieces which had been played hundreds of times. We looked at him with curiosity and with pity also; for his appearance, both in face and form, was altogether wretched. His eyes alone, though dimmed by chronic drunkenness, had retained their expression of wit and intelligence. There was still a little flame aglow in this brain which had been exhausted by so many debauches.

The waiter, who had seen the old man sidling into our arbor, rushed forward to turn him out. We interposed.

"This gentleman is one of our friends," said Pâris. "He is good enough to take a glass of wine with us, en passant."

Dorvigny shrugged his shoulders as the waiter withdrew.

"The scoundrels," he said, in a tone which Frédérick Lemaître afterwards used in his part in "L'Auberge des Adrets." "The scoundrels. I am one of the foundation-stones of their pothouse. I take my food here, I work here, I would even sleep here if they would let me, and they have no more respect for me than they have for the first snob who comes in. Well, gentlemen, here's to your health. Their chablis is not bad, though they don't know how to clarify it. Look at it, it isn't clear, it's not as limpid as it should be. But, prrr! — it goes down all the same."

"Do you live in this neighborhood, M. Dorvigny?" I asked.

"Yes, my young friend, I live opposite the barracks, over the Luquet dancing-rooms, but I am going to move shortly. In the morning there is the drum and the trumpet, and in the evening the fiddles and the flutes, and they disturb me."

"And you are still working?"

"Of course. I write plays for Ribié, the director of the Gaîté. But Ribié is a stingy curmudgeon. Formerly he used to pay me sixty francs for a vaudeville in one act, but now he only pays me forty — and wants to put his name to them

into the bargain. Stingy and conceited, I'll send him to the devil. A second go of chablis, gentlemen — I can't walk on one leg — and then I'll leave you to breakfast in peace."

"Oh, you don't disturb us at all, Monsieur Dorvigny. It's always a pleasure to talk with a man of intellect."

Dorvigny shook his head.

"Intellect," he cried. "O what has my intellect proved to me? It has only enriched other people."

"That's true," said I. "Nicolet ought to have left you an annuity when he died. You helped him to earn enough money for that."

"I have no complaint to make about Nicolet. Nicolet was a good-hearted man; he never refused me the price of a bottle. And then he was jolly, and even if he did take advantage of me, when he thought fit he always had something witty to say; that beast Ribié always looks as if he were going to weep for his stingy crowns."

"But," said Pâris, "if the reports in circulation as to your origin are true — as I am assured they are — I am surprised, my dear M. Dorvigny, that — were it only in consideration for the noble blood which flows in your veins — certain persons of the highest standing should allow you to work for a living at your age. I am well aware that, obliged by circumstances to live away from their native country, it may be difficult for these persons to

give you direct proofs of — the interest they take in you; yet, after all, they are rich, and if they were to send you a hundred pieces of gold every year it wouldn't ruin them, and it would help you to live."

This rather involved speech of Pâris was an allusion to a belief of very old standing in Paris, that Dorvigny was the natural son of Louis XV. This belief was based on his extraordinary resemblance to that king. If such was really the case, he never seemed to have had much reason to bless a destiny which had given him a king for a father, for he had always been a poor man, earning his living as author or comedian at the theatres.

One thing is certain, namely, that whilst my friend was talking to him about the noble blood which flowed in his veins, Dorvigny's face had assumed an expression which evinced how little pleased he was to hear this subject discussed. Pâris noticed the effect he had produced, and mumbled out his last sentence. As for Maricot and myself, we both felt ill at ease as we saw the old man so suddenly turning grave and sad. However, the situation did not last long.

Dorvigny had swallowed his second glass of chablis. Placing his empty glass on the table, he tapped Pâris on the shoulder with the tips of his fingers, and said,—

"Intelligent youth loves to learn, but sage old age loves not to speak. And, in any case, my

young friend, you must admit that were I what you think I am, it would be in very bad taste for me to boast about it just now."

Pâris was about to reply, but Dorvigny continued,—

"You seem to be three charming young fellows, —and it remains for me to thank you for your courtesy. It will be my turn next, some day when I have some money. And so, a very good-day. Should you happen to meet Ribié you can tell him he is a curmudgeon and that I would rather die of hunger than continue to write plays for him at forty francs apiece!"

Dorvigny had departed.

"It would appear," said Maricot, "that the son of the 'Well-Beloved' does not much care to hear any one speak of his father."

"Which is proof that he really is his son," said I. "He keeps his pride even in his destitution."

"Yes," said Pâris, "and I am very sorry that I touched on a subject which seems to be disagreeable to him."

"All the same, gentlemen, we must admit, that whether he is the son of a king or of a bootblack, it is a wretched end for a man of talent, such as Dorvigny was, to go begging for glasses of wine from strangers' tables in a greasy coat, and without uppers to his boots."

"If I were a rich man, I would place Dorvigny in a sanitarium."

"Where he wouldn't remain a week," said Maricot. "To live he must have wine, not herb-tea, and he would far rather sleep in the gutter than in a good bed."

Maricot was right, so right, indeed, that two or three months later, having at his command a couple of hundred francs which had been generously subscribed by some actors, at the instigation of Brunet, Dorvigny drank enough brandy to kill him, and kill him it did.

I have related how, after having in vain pursued that timid bird called a publisher, I put away "The Child of My Wife" at the bottom of a cupboard, and left it there for two years.

During two years, indeed, discouraged by the lack of success which had attended my first literary effort, I did not write a single line elsewhere than at my office. I had broken my pen as a novelist, and during two years had no thoughts of trimming a fresh one. It would, however, be a mistake to think that my grief at the annihilation of my literary dreams had any influence on my character during these two years. I was born with a great stock of philosophy. I never made long speeches — as under similar circumstances I have heard so many people do — whenever a misfortune or a worry assailed me. I have always tried to ward off the one, to forget the other, and I have always succeeded in so doing. Thus, when I was eighteen years old I hawked my first book at fifteen differ-

ent publishers' shops. None of these gentlemen would have anything to do with it; they had no confidence in my budding talents. All right, to the devil with literature. To the devil, for a time; for, of course, I had not given up all hope forever. No, I imitated those prudent gamblers who, when they see that the luck is against them, do not fight it, but yield the battlefield to Fortune and, while waiting till she shall smile on them, hasten to hide their cash from her. Glory repulsed me — so I consoled myself for the disdain of Glory with the smiles of Love.

I have no intention of relating all my love adventures as a young man in this book. Not that I am ashamed of them; on the contrary, I am outspoken and I say that I always remember them with pleasure. I have a far greater esteem for Anacreon, who at eighty sang the charms of Venus, than I have for Origen, who at twenty sacrificed his manhood so as to be able to teach religion — without being distracted therefrom — to women and maidens. But I know what a prudish age this is. I should not venture today to publish "La Pucelle de Belleville." Oh! Oh! The virtuous journalists, beginning with M. Veuillot, would not have stones enough in their bags wherewith to stone me to death. However, as I imagine that "The Memoirs of Paul de Kock" without some light stories would seem as strange an anomaly as an article by one of the journalists in

question without impertinent or insolent remarks, I would crave permission to relate, as occasion may present itself, some of the most amusing of the gallant adventures which have befallen me. But don't be afraid. You won't have to hide under the chimney-piece to read them. A light story is quite a different thing from an indecent story. My pen may often have been light, it has never been immoral. And, with all deference to M. Veuillot, I may remark that a pope in person — Gregory XVI — was of this opinion and showed it by taking pleasure in reading my novels.

In its proper place, I will give some curious evidence — which nobody has yet heard — to prove this statement.

What oratorical precautions to apologize because I remember as an old man the time when I was young! But it is once for all, and henceforward I shall follow my path in this book without troubling myself any more about my censors. I was going to write "geneurs," a new word. It's a good word. Let us turn our backs on censors and "geneurs" alike.

Well, then, during two years, from the autumn of 1811 to the autumn of 1813, renouncing literary work entirely, I gave myself up to my pleasures, as far, of course, as my occupation as a bank clerk and my moderate means permitted me. But I am one of those who hold that it is by no means indispensable to be rich in order to enjoy one's

self, and that, especially with women, a man who is young, good-looking and jolly, and fairly clever, has as good a chance as a man with a bag of gold. At least it was so in my time. Perhaps that has changed now; so many things have changed since then. If that is true in this respect also, all I can say is that I am sorry for the young men — and for the women too.

I must say it now, I was good-looking as a youth. I was not tall, and people used to complain that when walking I carried my head on one side, but I was slender, slim. Too slim perhaps, and for many years my people believed I was threatened with consumption. Well, such as I was, women did not throw their arms round my neck at first sight, but once they had done so they seemed to like to stay there. One of my favorite places for hunting up female acquaintances was the Tivoli. It was a garden the like of which is no more to be found in Paris. Are there many people living who remember it? I do not think so, for it is now more than forty years since it was closed. The Tivoli was situated on the site where that block of houses now stands, which is near the Havre railway-station, on the right as one comes from the boulevard. One reached it by the Rue Saint-Lazare, which was formerly the Rue d'Argenteuil et des Porcherons. The admission fee was three francs twelve sous, which, you see, was not ruinous. But, par exemple, all the

side shows had to be paid for extra, with the exception of the fireworks and the Théâtre Bobèche. One paid extra for the swings, of which there was a great variety, for the merry-go-rounds, the Egyptian birds, and the Russian mountains. Oh, the Russian mountains, I was crazy about them, and spent all my money there. There was also a man who made grimaces. Grimacers were fashionable at that time — are they not so still? The Tivoli grimacier was a jolly fellow, who wore a white wig, and played the trumpet and the violin. There was also a fortune-teller, a sorcerer, perched up in a hermitage, and an artist with scissors, who lived in a hut and cut out silhouette-portraits. In "Mon Voisin Raymond" I have related the misadventures of the said Raymond, who is forced to hide for three hours in the studio of the silhouette-cutter to escape the pursuit of the man with the Egyptian bird, whose eye he had knocked out. The incident is a true one, by the way, as are almost all the incidents which I have related in my novels. What comic scenes I witnessed at Tivoli. What funny things I heard in the crowds which thronged the illuminated walks, or, better still, amongst the couples in the arbors. And when the fireworks began what cries of joy, which often ended in cries of terror. A rocket falling on a lady's shawl or bonnet! — And the ball! Ah, as to public balls as they were then, nobody can contest the superiority of the past over the

present. No doubt it was a very mixed company at the Tivoli dances; one didn't meet noble lords and ladies there, but whatever the people may have been — lower middle-class folk or shopkeepers in their Sunday clothes, with their good ladies, shop-boys and grisettes — if there was nothing distinguished about them, there was also nothing low. Everybody danced decently, heartily, if not elegantly. Even the ladies of light virtue — the demi-vertus or demi-castors, as they were called in those days, those whom one now calls cocottes — who frequented the Tivoli gardens, behaved themselves respectably. One could join in a quadrille with them without having to blush for one's partner's sense of decency.

I was fond of dancing, and especially of waltzing, when I was twenty years old. I could have danced a whole hour without stopping, timing myself by my watch. Unfortunately, few are the women who waltz well, or at least so it was in 1812, at the Tivoli. So, before asking a dame or a damsel to waltz with me, I always used to watch her first as she waltzed with somebody else.

It was in this way that one evening I noticed a woman whom I did not remember to have ever seen before at this ball. Her appearance was out of the common. She was dark; twenty-five or thirty years old; had beautiful eyes, a small foot, magnificent hair; and her dress, if not elegant, was in good taste. And how she waltzed! She was

a living teetotum. Oh, her partner was not at all up to her mark; it was he who had to give in first, to beg for mercy. I saw her smile disdainfully.

"Tired already, monsieur? Very well, let us stop."

He led her back to her seat. I sprang towards her.

"Madame, if you are not tired, I am not tired either."

She looked me up and down, and I will wager that she guessed that my talents were on a par with my boldness. Great minds understand each other at first sight. Without saying a word she left the arm of her short-winded partner and took mine, and off we went like a whirlwind.

To make a long story short, my partner was as satisfied with me as I was with her, and so, not only did we waltz but we danced all the evening together, and when the ball was over we took it as a matter of course that I should offer to see her home, and that she should accept my escort.

She had come to the Tivoli with a lady friend, who left us at the Faubourg Montmartre, and as she lived in the Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré we had plenty of time to talk as we walked along. I had offered to take a cab, but she preferred to walk. She was married, her name was Madame O——, her husband had been a sailor, was twenty years her senior, and spent his days and nights at the café. She had only been living in Paris for

three months; before that she had lived at Havre. Having heard of the Tivoli she had been tempted to go there, and she did not regret it at all as she had enjoyed herself very much.

Denouement of the evening: Madame O—— was at the door of her house, a house where there was a newspaper printing-office.

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again, madame?"

"Certainly, whenever you please, monsieur."

"As your husband is always away from home will you permit me to pay you a little visit — to-morrow or the day after?"

"Why, I'll willingly permit you to do so."

It all went as smooth as our waltz. I was delighted, and the next evening at seven o'clock I presented myself at Madame O——'s.

It was an apartment on the third floor and well-furnished; the old sailor must have been a man of means. What struck me principally was an ornament in the drawing-room, which lay between the bedrooms of madame and monsieur — they slept apart. It was a collection of all kinds of weapons used by savages, hung against the wall. By Jove, what a collection of swords and arrows, of spears and knobkerries. Monsieur O—— had brought them all back on his voyages from the Indies. They were superb.

"And a good half of these weapons are poisoned," said Madame O——.

Poisoned! What delightful knick-knacks. She had sent her servant away on my arrival, telling her she should not want her again till the morning. So we were alone. I was in love. Time went rapidly by, and when the clock struck eleven I could not believe my ears; I had fancied it was not yet eight.

However, if I had every reason to believe that my feelings were reciprocated, I had as yet no right to sing of victory, for my triumph was not yet complete. So my mortification was great when, seeing how late it was, I decided to go. Turning my hat in my fingers I kept looking round the room, which it seemed I must leave disconsolate; my gaze rested especially upon a bed hung with blue muslin curtains, on which, hitherto, my aspirations had centered.

Madame O—— laughed.

"Oh, look here," I said, "you are very cruel. You don't love me."

"Oh, indeed! And why don't I love you?"

"Because you let me go."

"Oh! You would like to stay perhaps."

"Why, of course! Since your husband has his own bedroom, and since every night, as you tell me, he comes home half drunk — where's the danger, even though I stay the whole night with you?"

"You're mad."

"There's a printing-office downstairs, and so

the front door remains open all night; at dawn I could easily slip out without attracting the porter's attention. He would take me for one of the compositors."

"You are mad, I tell you."

"I am not mad in the least. What time does your husband usually come in?"

"At midnight. And you see the way the rooms are arranged; he's got to cross through mine to get to his."

"Well, what of that! We'll put out the candle and draw the bed curtains; your husband will believe you are asleep. Besides, as I said before, as he is always drunk he won't trouble himself about you. He'll go straight to his own room — Eh, Coralie (Coralie was the Christian name of my little waltzer), my pretty Coralie, won't you?"

Between ourselves, it was for form only that I addressed these tender solicitations to Madame O——, pure lover's braggadocio. I liked her very much, but not enough to care to risk my life for her. I implored her with such ardor because I was convinced that she would refuse me; I was merely playing a scene out of a novel in the style of "Faublas," nothing more. Imagine my astonishment when suddenly, clasping my head in her two hands, Madame O—— cried out,—

"All right; I agree, you little monster. Stay."

I must have turned pale, but Madame O—— did not notice it. She put out the candles. There

was no drawing back now, and certainly I didn't draw back. In five minutes I had rejoined her under the curtains.

What sort of a woman then was this creature, who didn't shrink from receiving in her arms, in her bed, a lover, when her husband's room was but a step away. And what a lover! a young fellow whom she had known for twenty-four hours! For moralists, the answer does not admit of doubt; this woman was a libertine of the worst kind. As for me, who am naturally inclined to look upon all human weaknesses with indulgence, I am content to say that Madame O—— was nothing but a silly creature, who acted as she did without thinking.

Still, I must, at the risk of giving a sorry opinion of my juvenile courage, confess that I found this night singularly long. As far as I was concerned, the pleasure was no compensation for my anxiety. And it was less during the hours of the night that this anxiety tormented me. The husband had returned as was his wont at midnight, and, with a step heavy from drink, although endeavoring to walk lightly so as not to disturb a slumber which was dear to him, having crossed through madame's bedroom and the drawing-room, had reached his own bed, where he had not delayed to stretch himself, and fall asleep. But when the first gleam of dawn began to whiten the casement, warning me that the moment had come to slip away, I began to feel extremely uneasy. Madame O——

gazed at me as I dressed myself, and smiled. But I! I didn't smile, I was seized with an attack of the shivers, and my heart beat rapidly.

I put on my breeches, my waistcoat, and my coat. I arranged my tie, and seized my hat. But I didn't put on my boots.

"And your boots?" said Coralie.

"I'll put them on outside — on the landing."

"You are right; they might make a noise on the floor. Although when he is asleep — Oh! there's no danger! — one might fire off a cannon in his room, and it wouldn't wake him!"

There was no danger — possibly not, but all the same I was anxious to get away. Madame O—— got up in order to accompany me as far as the door on the landing, and to shut it after me.

We must have formed a very curious group, she in her chemise, I dressed and carrying my boots in my hand. And, as we crept along on tiptoe, do you know of what I was thinking? I was thinking of the panoply of Indian weapons, of the poisoned lances and arrows. Behind me I imagined Monsieur O—— springing up all at once, brandishing a formidable bow; I heard the whiz of an assagai, and I felt the sharp point sink between my shoulders!

At length I reached the longed-for door! It opened.

"I'll see you again tonight, shan't I?" said Coralie to me in a low voice.

"Yes, yes! this evening."

Ha, ha! this evening! wait for me under the ivy bough! Enough to have played for once a game like this, many thanks! It was only when I had put on my boots that I breathed again. And when I was in the street, ah — I was ready to dance, to sing, to embrace all the sweepers and ragpickers whom I met.

Pâris, to whom I related my adventure, said, "That woman deserves to be flogged in a public place!" Perhaps that was too severe, although, mad as I had been, she was much to blame. I need hardly say that I never saw her again. Stay, yes, I did once, three or four years later. It was at the Gaîté theatre, and she was accompanied by some old gentleman, her husband, no doubt. As she passed me in the foyer, she cast a glance of sovereign disdain at me. No doubt she judged my conduct as unworthy of her notice. I did not mind her look in the least. She may have regretted that I had not stayed to be killed; I, for my part, was delighted to be still in the land of the living.

CHAPTER V

DURING the autumn of 1813 the literary fever again seized me. I was growing more and more tired of the banking house and its monotonous duties; and the more so, because, despite what my mother had said about my following in my father's footsteps, I saw there no prospect for the future; and, to be just, she herself began to comprehend that I should never make a fortune as a banker's clerk.

The little legacy, thanks to which my stepfather had been able to get me exempted from military service twice in six months, had put us all in more comfortable circumstances, for my mother with commendable prudence, had taken care to put a part of it out of the reach of M. Gaigneau, to whom it would have proved an irresistible temptation, as his passion for the fatal gambling table never left him, and who would undoubtedly have risked it all. Under these circumstances I allowed myself to hope that if I manifested the intention of quitting my employment—relying upon a first success as a writer—my mother would not oppose my doing so.

But how was I to obtain this success, seeing

that the publishers would not publish my novel? I was thinking thus one evening as I turned over the leaves of my manuscript, which I had taken out of the cupboard where, for the past two years, it had been growing yellow.

As I complacently read over certain passages I kept repeating — after the fashion of Galileo murmuring his famous "E poi se muove!" — "All the same, it's not at all bad. Much worse stuff than this has been printed."

Printed? But how much would it cost, after all, to print a two volume novel, say an edition of five hundred copies. I thought that five hundred copies would be enough for a first edition. Six or seven hundred francs, which at six francs the copy — allowing the booksellers a third as discount — would mean a profit of thirteen or fourteen hundred francs; that was clear, provided all the edition was sold. And why should it not be sold? There was a bookseller called Pigoreau who would place the book at the shops, in return for a small commission, if I brought it to him printed. He had offered to do so, this excellent Pigoreau!

Yes, but where was I to find the seven hundred francs which were indispensable for the printer.

I had just received my salary that day; ten bright new gold coins. To think that with little more than treble that amount I could command the public attention, the press. Take a first step, perhaps, towards the temple of Fame!

I was tossing my napoleons in the hollow of my hand in a melancholy manner, while dreaming these day-dreams; an exercise, alas, which did not increase their number. Suddenly a light broke in on me. An evil light, I admit, but in desperate circumstances one takes what light one can get. I had never set foot in a gambling-house, what was to prevent me from trying to get the money I wanted at such a place?

But of all resources gambling is the most deceptive, the least reliable. Had not this been proved to me thousands of times, by the thousand battles lost a thousand times by M. Gaigneau on the green cloth? It is true, my stepfather lost oftener than he won, but then he was almost a professional gambler, and Fate, tired of her constant struggles with him, turned her back on him, nine times out of ten. I, on the contrary, was only a gambler by chance; and whether lucky or not, I swore it, I would never gamble again after that once. And who knows?—"Full hands to the innocent," as the proverb has it—who knows but that my very inexperience, my awkwardness, would not propitiate fortune in my favor?

I put my two hundred francs in my pocket and I set out, along the boulevards, towards the Palais-Royal.

I was passing the Porte Saint-Denis, when I heard myself called by a voice which I knew well. It was my stepfather on the way home from his office.

"Where are you off to so fast?"

"I — I have an appointment."

"Oh! Is your mother at home?"

"Yes; that is to say, I don't know. Stop, yes, I believe she is."

I was confused. My conscience was pricking me. M. Gaigneau noticed it, for he resumed,—

"Come, what is the matter with you this evening, Paul? You don't look the same as usual. Has anything disagreeable happened? Tell me all about it, my boy."

M. Gaigneau spoke affectionately, and slipped his arm through mine. After all, my stepfather was no Cato — very far from it. If I confessed what my plan was, he might give me some good advice, nobody could do so better.

"Well, dear father," I said; "you must not scold me. I'll tell you all about it. I absolutely must have seven hundred francs, and I am going to try and win them at roulette."

M. Gaigneau gave a start.

"What, you wretch, you are going to gamble?"

"Oh."

"Yes, I know well that I scarcely have the right to preach you a sermon on the vice of gambling."

"Oh, I didn't mean to say that, dear father. Whatever you may do yourself, you have a perfect right to try and prevent me from perhaps making a fool of myself. But, I repeat, I must have seven hundred francs."

"Seven hundred francs? What for?"

"To print my novel. The publishers reject it; I want to do without the publishers. Do you understand? When 'The Child of My Wife' is printed, people will be forced to read it."

"Forced, eh? Well, so you hope, my boy, and I'd far rather see you spend your money in that way than wasting it in other kinds of folly. You'll always get something more for your money. And what capital have you got with which to try for seven hundred francs?"

"I have two hundred francs. My salary, which I have just received."

"Two hundred. Yes, one can do something at the tables with two hundred francs. And where did you mean to try your luck?"

"As to that, I am not quite sure. It's the first time, you see, that — I had been thinking of number 113, or Frascati's."

"Frascati's. No, no! Don't go to Frascati's; that's a dangerous house for young players. There are women there, and at your age women are in the way. Go, rather, to the Palais-Royal, or better still — but no, you haven't been introduced, so they wouldn't let you in at the Cercle des Étrangers."

"Is that a decent place, the Cercle des Étrangers?"

"Yes, it's the best place of the kind, the best kept and the most genuine. It's managed by an

ex-chamberlain of the emperor, the Marquis de Cussy."

"And do you go to the Cercle des Étrangers?"

"Yes, sometimes, when I'm in funds. And I've often enough been lucky there."

"Oh, indeed."

"But even the best of these houses is but a sad place, my dear; I've paid for my experience, and if you were wise—"

"Dear father."

"No, you don't want to be wise. You have made up your mind to risk your two hundred francs. All right. Now an idea has come to me, an idea which may please you or which may not. Never mind, I'll tell it to you, all the same."

"I am all ears."

"You have never gambled, therefore you don't know how to gamble. And besides you are nervous, impressionable and would play badly; you would lose."

"They say, however, that those who play for the first time—"

"Always win. That's silly talk for silly people. No, no, fortune is by no means so gracious as that to novices; or else all novices would have a dead certain chance, and could break all the banks in turn. There is a certain art in gambling, one must show a certain amount of sang-froid, make calculations based on the probabilities. Of course in spite of all that, one is never certain of—"

"And what is your idea, father?"

"Oh, my idea is very simple. A thing that happens often, very often—oh, people notice it every day—is that when a player is playing on somebody else's behalf, with somebody else's money—he wins."

"Yes, I understand."

"You trust me?"

"Of course. How can you ask me?"

"Well, you trust me with your two hundred francs. I shall go to the Cercle des Étrangers. You walk up and down outside, and wait for me. I shall play prudently, of course, not like a coward, but just as if I were playing on my own account. And I swear to you, do you hear me, Paul, I swear to you on my honor that as soon as I have won a thousand francs—seven hundred francs, you know isn't a round sum—I'll bring them to you. Well, what do you say to that?"

I hesitated, not that I had any fear of M. Gaigneau, but because I did not quite like to risk my ten napoleons, and perhaps lose them, without even having the excitement of staking them. But then it struck me that this very excitement might be my undoing.

"I accept your offer," I said.

Without exchanging another word, we walked with rapid strides to the Rue de Richelieu, where the Cercle des Étrangers was situated, at a short distance from Frascati's.

M. Gaigneau remained there an hour — an hour which seemed to me like a hundred years. Ah! the prettiest woman on earth might have smiled at me as she passed, during that hour, I should have paid no more attention to her than to a hunchback. At length, from the other side of the street, where, quite worn out with anxiety, I had seated myself on a post, I saw my stepfather come out. He looked pale and upset and came towards me wearing a very lugubrious expression.

"Well?"

"Well, poor old fellow, it wasn't my fault, but —"

A cloud came over my eyes and my heart sank. My "Child" would have to go back to its cupboard. But mastering my emotion, I cried out,—

"All right. Let's say nothing more about it, dear father."

"Oh," cried M. Gaigneau, suddenly changing his tone and his expression, "you are too good, Paul, and it is a shame to tease you any longer. I have won your thousand francs."

"Is it true? are you sure it's true? You're— not — you're not laughing at me?"

"Heaven forbid! Let's go into a café and I'll give you your money."

Resigned as I had been in adversity, I was nearly mad with joy. Hidden away in a corner of a café with my stepfather, I did not tire of looking at my thousand francs. My twelve hundred

francs, I should say, for my stepfather had won the thousand francs clear. So I was richer than I had wanted to be. I was too rich.

"I only wanted seven hundred francs," I said to M. Gaigneau, "and I have twelve hundred. It's only fair that you should keep five hundred."

"No, no; it's all yours."

"I beg of you."

"Not at all, my boy. It's better to have more than less when you are publishing a book. There may be expenses which you have not foreseen."

"Well, I'll keep nine hundred francs and you shall take three hundred."

"No, I tell you."

"Yes, or I shall be angry."

M. Gaigneau pocketed the three hundred francs.

"Very well," he said, "I'll take them, and do you know why I take them? It's because I'm quite sure of being able to give you them back in an hour, after having won another thousand."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"I'm in luck tonight; I feel it. And I can tell you it took a good deal of courage to leave the tables just now. But, you see, I had sworn it. Wait for me here, I shan't be long."

How could I say, "Be careful, Fortune is fickle," to a man who had just made me so happy? Besides to tell the truth, I did not imagine that M. Gaigneau would lose.

He was not long, indeed. I had just time to

jot down a few figures concerning my publishing scheme while taking some rice milk, when I saw him coming back.

He tried to smile.

"You have won?"

He shook his head. I thought he was joking again.

"Come, tell me the truth."

"I have lost it all, my boy. Oh! that's the truth this time. Psiiit, in five goes, it was all cleared out. But that was inevitable and I ought to have thought of it. I had broken the run of luck by leaving the table and couldn't join the broken ends."

I felt in my pocket.

"Will you —"

"What?"

"Will you let me give you another two hundred francs?"

M. Gaigneau put out his hand quickly, the gambler's hand. But the man, the father, the friend, was ashamed of this movement, his gesture of acceptance was transformed into one of refusal.

"No," he said quickly. "That's enough. Pay the waiter and let us go home to bed. It's quite late enough."

And whilst I was paying the waiter, he hastily left the café; no doubt to escape the temptation. I only caught up with him on the boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle.

Let me finish with an episode on which I have perhaps dwelt over long, the publication of my first novel. But you must forgive me, reader, weak though the book be it was the starting point of my career, and if you have given me a reason to congratulate myself on having become a novelist, it would be ungrateful on my part to despise my beginnings, inglorious though they were.

I had my book printed by a printer in the Rue de Turenne. Each copy of the five hundred, including stitching and covers, cost me sixteen sous a volume. My thousand volumes accordingly cost me eight hundred francs. Then there was the discount to the booksellers, besides Pigoreau's commission, as well as an infinity of general expenses which I had not thought of; for instance, the carriage of the books to the shops, two presentation copies to each of the principal newspapers. If I wanted the journalists to speak of my book, I had, of course, to let them know of it. In one word, I might esteem myself extremely fortunate if, after selling the whole edition, I got my money back again. And that did not allow for a dozen copies which I had kept for my friends and acquaintances.

But it was the distribution of these twelve copies which caused me the most annoyance. My mother and my stepfather gave me some words of praise, and so did Pâris and Maricot. But my other friends!

"Oh, that's by you, is it? Oh, indeed. So you want to become a famous man? Humph, a difficult task, my dear boy. You know the axiom: 'Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum.'"

"'The Child of My Wife.' I don't like that title. It's not in good taste."

"Are there any ghosts, any phantoms in your novel? I don't care about anything else."

"I have read your book, my dear Paul; it's funny. But be careful, you have a tendency to sail too near the wind, and a writer who does not respect his readers, you know, will never be more than a third-rate author."

And then the remark of a gay woman, whom I was courting at the time, and to whom I had hastened with my book as soon as it left the printers, thinking that would advance me in her good graces.

"I must say you're very good to take the trouble to write books like this." This "you're very good" seemed to me so stupid, that it dealt a death-blow to my love.

I went every day to Pigoreau's to hear how it was selling. Four dozen copies were sold the first week. I was in ecstacies. There was no doubt about it, the edition would be exhausted in two months. But the second week only two dozen were sold, and only one dozen the third. And after that no more dozens at all; only one or two copies here and there. In my enthusiasm I had

sketched out a second novel; "Georgette, ou la Nièce du tabellion," but this dampened my ardor. What was the use of writing if nobody read me? I was all the more upset because, in the first transports of intoxication at having sold four dozen copies, I had left my place at the bank. Could a famous novelist remain a petty bank clerk? Yes, but the petty bank clerk was earning two hundred francs a month, and the novelist—whilst awaiting his fame—was earning nothing at all.

I was moodily returning one evening from Pigoreau's, when, as I was walking down the Rue Montorgueil, I met Caigniez, celebrated at the time as the author of a number of melodramas which rivalled as successes those of Guilbert de Pixérécourt. Caigniez used to be called the Racine, and Pixérécourt the Corneille of the boulevard. Racine-Caigniez was a little man, about fifty years old, gentle and unassuming. I had won his heart because one day, in telling him how I had seen one of his first pieces, "la Fôret enchantée, ou la Belle au bois dormant," when I was only seven years old—it was a melodrama and a fairy tale combined, which had been played at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, in the year VIII—I had quoted at full length some of the verses in it. He was one of the first persons to whom I gave a copy of my book, and he had paid me a compliment about it which I never forgot.

"One can judge a writer's future by his first

work," he said. "Your book is no masterpiece, but it has humor in it. A man who can write like that at eighteen ought to be a man of talent at thirty."

Caigniez died at an advanced age, for he still came to see me at Romainville in 1832 and 1833. I may mention that my wife did not at all care for his coming to our house, and this was the reason. As a young man, the author of "la Pie voleuse" had had the leprosy, yes, the real leprosy — and he took delight in recalling this event; it seemed interesting to him to be perhaps the only Parisian who could boast of having had the leprosy. It was an old man's craze. At any rate, whenever my wife saw him coming she used to make a face. It was no use my telling her that there was no danger, that Caigniez had been cured years ago, she was not at her ease, after his departure, till I had washed the hand which had pressed the good man's with quantities of soap and eau de cologne.

To go back to the beginning of 1814, and my meeting with Caigniez in the Rue Montorgueil.

"Well," said he, "and how's your 'Child' going?"

"So, so, M. Caigniez. It's true that Pigoreau tells me that the sales of books always fall off in January."

"He's quite right. January is only good for the toy-shops and confectioners."

"And for the theatres."

"Humph. Theatres are beginning badly this year. You see, the political outlook is so gloomy that people have no desire to go to the play. And where are you going now, De Kock?"

"I'm going home to my parents."

"You haven't dined? Will you come and dine with me at Baleine's, without ceremony?"

The invitation was too cordially made for me to refuse it. I followed Caigniez into the Rocher de Cancale, a restaurant at the corner of the Rue Mandar, which had become fashionable since the monthly dinners of the Caveau Moderne had been held there. It happened to be the twentieth, the very day on which this club of singers met. People used to fight for the private rooms which adjoined that reserved for these gentlemen, so as to hear them sing. As an habitue of the house, and especially as a dramatic author, a qualification held in high esteem by Baleine, Caigniez got one of these private rooms. But it was still early, and we had plenty of time to dine and chat before the singing began.

"Why don't you try your hand at writing for the stage, my dear De Kock?" asked Caigniez, between the pear and the cheese.

"I am afraid I should not be successful."

"Bah, there's nothing very difficult about a melodrama or a vaudeville. It takes months of work to write a novel, whilst a three-act play can be written in three weeks, if one chooses."

"But I am not acquainted with any theatrical managers."

"You'll get to know them. Corsse, the manager of l'Ambigu-Comique, is a very good fellow."

"And what about M. Bourguignon,[1] of the Gaîté?"

"Bourguignon is a good fellow also, but his wife wears the breeches, and she's not always very gracious."

"Then it would be better to try something for the Ambigu?"

"Yes; than for the Gaîté. Work, and when you are ready, I'll introduce you to Corsse."

"Oh, many thanks in advance."

I was so pleased at the thought of this new opening that, whilst listening in an absent-minded way to the songs of gentlemen of the "Caveau," who had begun to sing, I began to think out the plot of my melodrama. However, the shouts of laughter and the applause soon recalled the attention which was due to the talents and renown of my neighbors. Caigniez, who knew them almost all quite intimately, named each singer as he heard his voice. There was Piis, who combined his laurels as a singer with his salary as Secretary-General at the Prefecture of Police; Armand Gouffé, who was called the Panard of the nineteenth century; Brazier; Eusèbe Salverte, who afterwards abandoned poetry for politics and went into the

[1] This was Ribie's successor (P. de K.).

Chamber on the opposition side; Jouy, who had not yet written "William Tell" with Rossini, but who had already written "La Vestale" and "Fernand Cortez" with Spontini, and "L'Ermite de la Chaussée d'Antin" by himself, two volumes for which the public was fighting at the bookstalls; Rougemont; Désaugiers, the merriest of them all; Théaulon; Béranger, who sang that evening, by general request, his "Roi d'Yvetot," a witty criticism on the despotic government of the emperor, a criticism which, unfortunately, in 1814 sounded more like a dirge than a satirical song.

Later on, I became intimate with most of those whom I have named. Indeed, it was at the suggestion of Armand Gouffé — who was the most charming man in the world when he was not the sourest and bitterest — that I also wrote songs. Under the Restoration, notably, I wrote a song, of which no doubt you have never heard, but which in its day was played on the barrel organs, not only in Paris, but throughout the whole of France. Mengal wrote the music, and the tune remained popular at the theatres for years. It was called "le Chevalier errant," and procured me the honor of a reply, also in verse and to the same tune, from a poet in Bordeaux, who wrote in the name of the fair sex in his native town — that if my "Chevalier errant" had never met with faithful sweethearts, it was because his travels had never carried him as far as the capital of the Gironde.

This is the first verse of "le Chevalier errant."

In Andalusia, to a castle old,
  In days when love was faithful still and true;
And beauty linked with gallantry made bold
  The faithful lover where war's bugles blew;
Came a brave knight and knocked, as twilight fell,
  With visor raised, and with his lance in rest,—
To ask if the sweet maid he loved so well,
  Were not, perchance, the castle chieftain's guest.

There are four verses, but don't be afraid, I am not going to quote more than one. Yet, young men who read me, if your grandfather or grandmother be still alive, lay this verse before him or her, and I will wager, when you see him or her smile, as he or she hums this sweet souvenir of youthful days, that you will not regret that I spoke to you of my first song.

I was in luck that evening of the twentieth of January, 1814, for, as we were walking home by the boulevards, Caigniez and I, we were accosted by Martainville, whom I then knew only by reputation, and very proud I was to have a chat with him as we took a glass of punch together at the café of the Gaîté.

Do I say chatted, one could hardly chat with Martainville, for the reason that he never let anyone put in a word edgeways. I have met many people who resemble Martainville in this respect during my lifetime. Besides, at twenty, the best thing I could do was to listen, and so accordingly

I did. And, indeed, I had no reason to regret it. What a witty fellow he was, this Martainville. What high spirits. Funny sayings, and comic anecdotes, poured from his lips. Everyone knows that he was a Royalist. Already foreseeing at that time that the Empire would be overthrown, shaken as it was by a series of reverses, he kept pouring out his stinging remarks about "M. de Buonaparte" and "all his humbugging family"—I quote his own words—"who were at last going to be swept out of France by our legitimate king!" One might gauge the destinies of a government by the more or less reserve with which people speak of it in public places. Six months previously Martainville could not have said one half of what he said at the café of the Gaîté that night without being arrested.

He left us, as he said, to go and "work at a play which Bourguignon had just ordered." And Caigniez, watching him as he went, shrugged his shoulders and said,—

"What a madman—a madman full of talent, who in spite of his worth will die in the gutter. What good will it do him if Louis XVIII 'sweeps M. de Buonaparte and all his humbugging family out of France?' If Martainville could bring the Bourbons back to the Tuileries in his pocket to-morrow, the Bourbons would have completely forgotten the author of the 'Pied de mouton' the day after. It's always a mistake for a light writer

to try and play the politician. People won't admit that a man who yesterday made them laugh with some silly joke can talk to them tomorrow of serious matters."

This was not badly reasoned for a manufacturer of melodramas, was it? And Caigniez's words were prophetic. Martainville, Royalist in spite of everything — Martainville, more Royalist than the king himself — made a very bad bargain. He found neither fame nor fortune under the folds of the white flag.

Let me relate two anecdotes of him, not of a political nature, which Caigniez told me, and which I believe are little known.

Martainville had long promised Ribié, then manager of the Gaîté, to write him a pantomime, and never did so. One day, being in need of money (a need which pressed him often) he called on Ribié and asked him for something on account of the piece.

"I shan't give you anything on account," the latter said to him, "because you have proved twenty times that sums on account don't bind you in the least, but — today is the tenth of the month — come on the thirtieth and read me the first two acts of your pantomime and I'll pay you, then and there, five hundred francs in advance of royalties."

Martainville reflected a moment. Then he said—

"All right. I won't come on the thirtieth, but on the twentieth; I can write two acts in ten days."

"Just as you like, I am ready when you are."

On the day appointed, at noon, Martainville appeared in the manager's office, where he found Ribié, with Marty, one of his leading actors, who usually advised him on matters of business. Martainville had the manuscript of his two acts, tied with pink ribbon, under his arm. He installed himself near the window and began to read. Ribié and Marty, who were seated near the fireplace, a few steps off, listening to him, and, from the first scene, shouting with laughter. The first act has been read; now for the second. Martainville did not stop to drink even the traditional glass of sugared water, so anxious was he to hear the praises of his audience. And praises he received to his heart's content, for the second act was at least as good as the first.

As soon as the reading was finished he rolled up his manuscript, and tied the roll with pink ribbon.

Ribié and Marty could not stop laughing. It's charming. It will run a hundred nights. Oh, Martainville must make haste and write the third act.

"You shall have it in a week. And now, my five hundred francs."

"Here they are. Oh, you have kept your word and I'll keep mine."

"Very good. Au revoir."

Martainville had slipped the twenty-five napoleons into his pocket, he threw his manuscript

down on the table and darted out, repeating, "In a week."

"What a hit! What a hit that will make," continued Ribié, locking up his desk. "I have said a hundred nights; it will run three hundred, if only —"

"Hullo! I say!"

"What's the matter?"

The shout which had interrupted Ribié was uttered by Marty, who had untied the pink bow, smoothed out the manuscript and was turning over the pages.

"Why, what's the matter?" the manager reiterated, springing towards his friend.

"Look here."

Horrors! The manuscript consisted of a number of blank pages of paper on which not a trace of writing was to be seen. Not a line, not a word, not even a blot.

To get his five hundred francs Martainville had improvised, as he sat there, the two acts of his pantomime, prose, verse, and scenic effects; he did not write it out till six months later. And Ribié and Marty used to say that when it was written, it was not as good as the piece he had read to them out of his head.

At any rate, the trick, as a literary feat, was well worth five hundred francs.

The second anecdote is of a rather more decolleté nature.

In the summer, during the very hot weather, Martainville customarily worked in the costume of our Father Adam — before the fall. He used to say that his thoughts came out all the fresher for it.

One afternoon a middle-aged lady called on the author, who, as it happened, was without a servant at the time.

Martainville, entirely taken up with his work, went and opened the door without thinking of his lack of clothing.

The lady fled, shrieking like a peacock. However, as it was absolutely necessary that she should speak to him she went to the chief of police of the quarter, and begged him to go and ask M. Martainville to choose a more decent costume in which to receive her. The chief of police, who knew the author of "Grivoisiana," laughing in his sleeve at this new eccentricity, went to the writer's lodging. Martainville was still in the same primitive costume.

"M. Martainville, a complaint has been made against you at my office and I see that it was a well-founded one."

"A complaint? Who has made a complaint? and what about, M. le Commissionaire?"

"A lady who came to talk over some money matters with you, and who found you as I find you now."

"Oh, quite right. But what would you have?

It's so hot. And, besides, hasn't a man a right in his own house —"

"No doubt a man has a right to work in a state of nudity in his own house; for all that when he presents himself to a visitor, why, seriously —"

"All right. I'll make that all right, M. le Commissionaire, be easy. Where is the lady, if you please?"

"At the foot of your staircase, waiting for me to tell her she can come up."

"Tell her she can come up in five minutes. My dress shall be faultless then, I promise you."

"All right."

The commissionaire rejoined the lady and informed her that M. Martainville would receive her in five minutes. When the five minutes had elapsed, the lady went upstairs and rang for the second time at Martainville's door.

And for the second time she uttered an indignant exclamation and fled at sight of Martainville dressed in nothing but an evening coat and a pair of white gloves.

She had come up expressly from the country on behalf of an uncle of his, who, being about to die, wanted to make him his sole heir. Martainville never saw the lady again, and he never saw the legacy either. His joke had cost him dear.

Caigniez had given me three weeks to write a melodrama. I finished it in a fortnight. It is true that I had worked my hardest. It's title was

"Madame de Valnoir," and it was taken from Ducray-Duminil's novel. It was in three acts. I copied out the whole of these three acts in two nights, in my very best writing, and took them to Caigniez, who, good fellow that he was, read them at once. When I next called on him, to hear his opinion, he said,—"It's very good. Let's go and see Corsse. He'll play that at once."

Corsse, who twelve years previously had made the Ambigu, as an actor in the play of "Madame Angot au serail," by Aude, had become the manager of this theatre, and had there made a fortune of about three million francs. Corsse was already thinking of retiring in 1814, and was beginning to leave the management of business matters to his partner, Madame de Puisaye. But he made a point of attending to all new pieces himself. So it was to him that Caigniez took me. His reception of me was a more gracious one than I had hoped for. He professed the highest esteem for Caigniez, to whom he owed much of his monetary success.

"Have you read the gentleman's play, my dear fellow?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And your opinion is that it has merit, since you are fostering it."

"It's full of merit."

"That's enough. I'll take a glance at it to see what it's about, and in two or three days from now we'll begin to rehearse 'Madame de Valnoir.'

Your address is on the manuscript, is it not M. de Kock? I shall write to you tomorrow, probably, to come and arrange the cast with me. Is there a part for Fresnoy?"

"Yes, and there's a very good part also for Villeneuve — and a comic part for Raffile."

"Good, good — and the ladies? What's your idea? Madame de Valnoir — ?"

"That's for Mademoiselle Le Roy."

"Is there nothing for Adele Dupuis?"

"Oh, yes, there's a part for Adele Dupuis which will please her, I think!"

"Bravo. You shall have Mademoiselle Le Roy and Mademoiselle Adele Dupuis, Villeneuve, Fresnoy, Raffile. You shall have our best actors and actresses, and it won't be our fault — nor your's either, I'm sure — if 'Madame de Valnoir' doesn't make her way. It'll be the fault, of that madman, that crack-brained fellow who just now is busy ruining France — and Paris, in consequence."

The "madman," the "crack-brained fellow" to whom Corsse alluded was the emperor. In 1814, in Paris, after his departure at the end of January to fight the enemy who was invading France, this was how they spoke of him everywhere. Out of sight, out of mind. He was still acclaimed when he was in the Tuileries; people had faith in his star, but away in Champagne, exhausting himself in efforts of genius and courage to drive the allied

armies from his country, he was nothing but a "madman," a "crack-brain," and everyone predicted, I might almost say desired, his fall, blind to the irreparable disasters which the ruin of this one man would entail upon all.

I say what I think about public opinion in 1814, as I remember it in writing my memoirs, for in 1814, I confess it humbly, I troubled my head but little about political matters. Like Retif de la Bretonne, author of "Le Paysan perverti," who, when the Terror was at its height busied himself only in writing and printing his novels, so I, during the two years 1814 and 1815, of such sad memory since they were the dates of two invasions, thought of nothing but of writing my plays and getting them acted. I was a very bad citizen, it may be said. Not worse than another, for if I had felt myself too weak to defend my country as a soldier, I was at least honest enough not to set myself up as the severe judge of the acts of the man who, after having governed it gloriously for fourteen years, had precipitated it into the abyss; or as the servile flatterer of the man who by a revulsion of fortune was called upon to govern France in his turn. Besides — and I do not conceal the fact — like my friend, Benjamin Antier, I have always found politics the vainest and dullest thing in the world.

I can readily admit that a journalist, a deputy who makes a name and sometimes a fortune by

applauding or vilifying, day by day, such or such a form of government, will not share my opinion; but if those who live by monarchies or by republics are right — especially when their living is a good one — in booming the one or the other, I hold that those who have nothing to gain, and too often have to lose by changing this for that, are utter simpletons to trouble about this or that.

Now, because I have always avoided mixing myself in these matters, either by thought or deed, does that mean that I have remained indifferent to the too numerous revolutions which I have seen convulse the country during the last forty years? Certainly not. Certain events have grieved me bitterly, whilst certain others, on the contrary, have had all my sympathy. But, sympathy or grief, I have always kept it to myself, expecting as little from the master of whom I approved as I feared of the master of whom I disapproved.

This digression has once again taken me far away from my subject. But it was quite necessary, for all that, that I explain to you how, whilst Napoleon was falling, to make room for Louis XVIII, who soon was to make room again for him, and yet again to take his place afresh, I, for my part, was writing melodramas.

First of all, "Madame de Valnoir," performed for the first time March 23, 1814; then "Catherine de Courlande," played on the first of September following; "La Bataille de Veillane,"

played April 15, 1815; and "Le Troubadour portugais" (there's a title for you!), played November 7 of the same year.

Four melodramas in two years. A melodrama every six months. By Jove, yes! And all the four were played at the Ambigu-Comique. Corsse and Madame de Puisaye had opened their hearts to me, and I had taken up my abode with them. And if it is surprising that while France, crushed and bleeding, changed her ruler four times, and that, while twice over the foreigner trod victoriously on the pavement of Paris, there should have been found pens to write melodramas, is it not more surprising still that, in this same Paris, a public should have been found to listen to those melodramas and to applaud them? For, of my four plays, two, especially, were successful;—"Madame de Valnoir" and "La Bataille de Veillane." "Madame de Valnoir," especially at the first performance, procured me an ovation with which I could gladly have dispensed. You shall hear why.

This first performance took place, as I have said, on March 23, 1814, that is to say a week before the entrance of the allies within our walls. On the morning of March 23 an army of one hundred and eighty thousand men was within sight of Paris, which Marmont and Mortier in despair were preparing to defend, and on the evening of that same day, a new melodrama was played at the Ambigu-Comique — and the house was packed.

Bread and shows, "Panem et circenses," that, it is said, was what the Romans wanted. The Parisians are less exacting; provided they have plays they will forget their hunger; they will even forget to weep for their misfortunes.

The play went splendidly from start to finish. Fresnoy, Villeneuve, Joigny were excellent. Raffile was delightful. Mademoiselle Le Roy, in the third part, as a traitress, was magnificent. Mademoiselle Adele Dupuis, as the persecuted victim, was touching enough to melt rocks to tears.

This, of course, is what I thought in 1814. And to tell the truth, the actors of those days were quite as well worth seeing as those of the present time. They had also the advantage of being infinitely less conceited than their successors of the present day.

I was in the seventh heaven of delight. After the first and second acts, I had not words of praise enough to bestow on the eminent interpreters of my work; after the third act I was anxious to entwine wreaths for their brows. Wreaths for the gentlemen and kisses for the ladies. That is quite the usual thing, from author to actresses, after a successful first night, and there was one young lady especially, a Mademoiselle Eleonore, whom I was particularly anxious to reward in this way.

We had come to the last scene. In a few minutes all would be over and nothing would remain to be achieved but the announcement, in the midst

of unanimous applause, "Gentlemen, the piece which we have had the honor of presenting to you tonight is by ——." My name! I was to hear my name proclaimed. At this thought my heart beat so fast that I could hardly breathe.

The piece ends with this tirade, addressed by Count Albert de Rivebelle to Timon Vaklin.

"Good old man, I hope that you will not leave us. We will try, by our attention and by our friendship, to cause you to forget your misfortune in having given to the world a monster such as the one from whom we are so fortunately delivered."

At these words, pronounced by Villeneuve, who was playing Count Albert de Rivebelle, it was not applause which broke out in the theatre, but yells and howls of approval. What does that mean? I listen from my place in the wings to these frenzied shouts and am stupefied. The curtain falls. The author is called for amidst shouts and stampings of feet. The curtain is raised. Fresnoy goes up to the prompter's box.

"Gentlemen, the piece we have had the honor of performing tonight is by M. Paul de Kock."

"Bravo! Bravo! Long live Paul de Kock. Bring him out. Let us see the author."

Villeneuve came up to me laughing.

"They want to see me," I stammered, "and what for? It's not the usual thing, is it?"

"No, it's not, except when the play is quite exceptionally good."

"Well."

"Well, my dear sir, your play is thought exceptionally good, it appears — and do you know why? It's because of the last sentence. 'We will try to cause you to forget the misfortune of having given the world a monster such as the one from whom we are so fortunately delivered.'"

"I don't understand."

"What, you don't understand that the audience sees in this sentence an allusion to the tyrant, to the Corsican ogre, defeated by the allied troops, who, as everybody hopes, will never again set foot in Paris?"

"Ah, mon Dieu! But this allusion had never occurred to my mind."

"I believe you. But it was in the minds of the spectators, and that is why they want to show you their gratitude. Ha! ha! Do you hear them? They are calling you. You can't resist them, my dear sir. You must go and enjoy your triumph."

Villeneuve drew me towards the stage.

"No," I cried, freeing myself. "No; I did not mean to refer to the emperor when I wrote those words. I should blush to have written anything so insulting. So I won't answer this call. Good-by."

And so saying I ran off without thanking my actors and, what to me was more cruel still, without kissing the actresses.

And the strangest part of it is that my mother,

my stepfather and all my friends were convinced, just as my audience had been, that I had meant the vanquished Napoleon by my monster. I had infinite trouble in dispossessing them of this idea. On what strange things do destinies depend. Had it accorded with my taste I could have set up as a political writer from that day forth. Fortunately, the sentence which had attracted so much attention at the first performance passed unnoticed at the second, for the approach of the enemy and the imminence of a battle had begun, despite everything, to frighten the Parisians a little and, in consequence, the theatre was barely half full. And as my horror for politics in this matter dominated my interests as an author I was pleased rather than vexed with the lukewarm attitude of the crowd.

Oh, these Parisians, what weathercocks they are! I have always had the deepest pity for the people who have tried to keep them to one thing — an impossible task.

I saw the Parisians at the Ambigu-Comique on March 23, 1814, applauding the prospect of the overthrow of the Empire.

A week later I saw them on the boulevard soiling their white handkerchiefs by wiping up the dust under the feet of the horses of the Allied Sovereigns as they pranced at the head of their armies.

I saw them in the month of May following, when Louis XVIII had entered the Tuileries,

dancing under the windows of this palace and howling: "Long live our legitimate king."

Then, because their legitimate king ventured to hold an opinion not absolutely in accordance with their own, because he had a desire to restore to his friends, as a reward for their sufferings during the long exile which they had shared with him, the estates of which they had been robbed; and because he wished — a pious and noble sentiment — to build a tomb for the remains of Louis XVI and of Marie-Antoinette, I heard these same Parisians lamenting that a Bourbon had been restored to them and regretting Father Violet, as the soldiers used to call the emperor.

And when Father Violet returned to Paris in March, 1815, I saw them crowding round him on the Place du Carrousel, deafening him with their cries of joy and of love, swearing to die for him to the last man.

Vows which last a hundred days. A hundred days later the Parisians had once more ceased to love Napoleon, to bestow their affection afresh on Louis XVIII. On July 8, 1815, they were once more dancing at the Tuileries under the windows of their legitimate king. This did not prevent them some years later, in June, 1821, from beginning a little repetition of the July revolution on the boulevards, to shouts of "Long live the Charter."

But I must stop, for I could fill a volume with

an account of all the changes of front which I have seen in the Parisians. And besides, I am preaching to people who are already converted, I imagine. My readers know, as well as I do, what to think of a people of whom some writer, whose name I forget, said that it would be the first in the world "If it could only make up its mind once for all about what it likes and what it wants."

One morning, in the year 1837, my servant came into my bedroom, which is also my study, and informed me that "an old friend wished to speak to me." An old friend! That was enough to make me go down and meet my visitor. And so I did, although I had a secret suspicion as to the claim. When a man has made a name, all sorts of friends spring up around him, friends whom he doesn't know and whom he doesn't care to know.

I found a poorly dressed old man standing in the centre of my drawing-room.

"Good-day, my dear Paul de Kock," he said, holding out his hand.

And as I did not respond, for the simple reason that I did not recognize in the least the man who wanted to shake hands with me, he continued gayly,—

"Ha, ha! I understand, it's a long time since we saw each other last. You don't remember me, that's certain. You are always the same, but then you are still quite a young man, while I shall be seventy-two next month. Alas, yes, poor old

Villeneuve is on the eve of his seventy-second birthday."

"Villeneuve! Oh, I beg your pardon, my friend. Pardon me for not having recognized you."

"No offence. I must have changed so much during the fifteen years that I have been absent from Paris. Hang it! during these fifteen years I haven't eaten beefsteak and potatoes every day. I haven't even had potatoes without beefsteak every day."

"You have been unlucky."

"I have been unlucky and am so still. You see, my feathers correspond with my song. I have all my wardrobe on my back, and it's not very elegant, is it? Ah, it's a far cry from this to the day when I used to be called the elegant Villeneuve. But, to begin with, perhaps you may remember it, my wife died in 1831, and that quite disorganized my life. Not that my wife was a woman of much order. No, economy and Madame Villeneuve never lived under the same roof. But all the same, she kept me on the curb and prevented me from making a fool of myself—headstrong as I was. For instance, if she had lived, I should never have left the Ambigu-Comique. Oh, do you remember, it was I who played the leading part in your first piece at the Ambigu?"

"Oh, I remember it very well."

"'Madame de Valnoir,' a good little melodrama,

upon my word, for a beginner. And at the end of the first performance the audience wanted to carry you in triumph because of a certain sentence which it was thought contained an allusion — "

"Which never existed. And where do you come from, Villeneuve?"

"I have just come up from the country. I have dragged my gaiters almost everywhere during the last fifteen years — deteriorizing more and more as I grew older. I used to play the leading parts at Bordeaux, and now people will hardly employ me as letter-carrier at the theatres at Meaux or Coulommiers. And you, my dear Paul de Kock? It's different with you, you are more fortunate than ever today."

"I have worked very hard."

"Yes, yes, you have made a name as a novelist, I know that. Oh, I have read several of your books in the country. Amongst others, 'La Maison blanche.' It's excellent, and what a fine melodrama one could make of it. I say, you are not vexed with me for having called on you as a very old acquaintance?"

"Certainly not. But what is your object in returning to Paris? Do you hope to — ?"

"To get on the stage again? Oh, no, I'm too old. Oh, I don't deceive myself. I am too old. No manager could want me to-day. My ambition — and I have some friends with influence — is to get admitted into an establishment of a very

different kind. You see, I am seventy-two years old, the eligible age."

"And what is this establishment?"

"Why, Bîcetre, of course. There at least I shan't starve."

Poor Villeneuve! Come down to an asylum.

"Here, my friend," said I, slipping a louis into his hand, "here's something to help you to live till you get into Bîcetre."

He looked at the gold as if he wished to kiss it.

"Thank you," he said. "You are good. I expected it of you. Ah, the sight of this yellow-boy makes me feel quite young again, upon my word. Will you let me call on you again, to present my respects, before I go to the asylum."

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you once more, au revoir."

The old actor had departed. Eleven o'clock was striking, so I lunched and went out. It was my custom, at that time, to go and read the papers at the Café de l'Ambigu every day after lunch, a café restaurant which in those days was kept by a man called Quiney, whose talents as a cook were much appreciated by connoisseurs.

As I had lunched I went into the café part of the establishment. There were few people there of a morning, and I could quietly read what interested me. I had crossed the threshold of this room and had picked up a newspaper when a joyous voice uttering these words solicited my attention:

"Hullo, hullo! Paul de Kock. You are doing the same as I, dear friend, you have come to take a cup of coffee after your lunch."

I turned sharply around and, I confess, was petrified. He who had spoken to me was none other than Villeneuve. Villeneuve, the old actor, to whom I had just given alms, and who to my surprise I found, a few minutes after I had given him money to provide himself with the necessaries of life, indulging himself in luxuries, and not afraid to hail me in a joking way.

I thought it so strong that I couldn't say a word. Villeneuve, however, did not appear at all moved by my silence, and having sipped his drop of coffee he paid the waiter and went out, saying, as he passed me with a familiar nod,—

"Au revoir, my dear Paul de Kock."

Quiney entered the room just as Villeneuve left it.

"Has that old gentleman been lunching here?" I asked.

"Yes."

"What sort of a lunch did he have, may I ask?"

"Oh, a fairly good lunch and, between ourselves, his order rather surprised me, for the old man doesn't look up to much. Oysters, a fillet with olives, a fried sole, some Roquefort and a bottle of moulin-a-vent. It ran up to eight francs. But why do you ask me, M. de Kock. Do you know the old gentleman?"

"Yes, I know him a little. He's an old actor. But my question was of no importance. I'm much obliged to you, M. Quiney."

It was too much. He had spent eight francs on his lunch, and, with the influence of all his friends, all his future prospects reduced themselves to a cell in Bîcetre. "Go and give alms to such humbugs," I grumbled to myself.

But after reflection calmed me. Great and small, rich and poor, it is notorious that artists don't look on life and never will look on it like the ruck of martyrs of middle-class life. On the eve of breaking the black bread of charity, Villeneuve had wished to eat the white bread of luxury for the last time. And why not? What right had I to reproach him for this last pleasure because I had given him a miserable twenty-franc piece? I regretted that I had given him a cold look; I will wager that if I had given him a smile he would have been delighted to have returned my politeness by offering to pay with my money for my little cup of coffee.

CHAPTER VI

In the five chapters which precede this one and which—in accordance with the mode of classification that I settled on when I commenced to write down all that I remembered of my life—begin in 1793 and end in 1815, and which represent in some sort the first part of my memoirs, I have initiated you, if not day by day, at least almost year by year in all those things relating to myself from my infancy and early youth which I judged might prove of interest to you. Hereafter I shall stride much more rapidly across the field of memory, for two reasons, the first of which is that I am not writing the history of my life (my life, I am happy to say has always been too calm, too simple and too uneventful to deserve the interest of the public), but merely jotting down my reminiscences; and in the second place the obligation to follow a methodical chronological order in relating events appears to me as irksome as it is monotonous, and I very much prefer not to be constrained by its observance, both for my own sake and that of my readers.

Thus, for example, I have told you how I published my first book, and how I got my first play

acted; well, I shall assuredly refrain from telling you the stories, one after the other, of each of the works of my pen which were published or appeared on the stage after "The Child of My Wife" and "Madame de Valnoir." Up to date I have written nearly four hundred volumes and I have had more than two hundred pieces acted on the stage—melodramas, dramas, comic operas, pantomimes, comedies, and vaudevilles—and you will therefore admit that, were I to try and speak of them all in detail, I should show great vanity and put your patience to a terrible proof.

Accordingly, when I happen to remember an anecdote referring to such or such a novel, or to such or such a play; or, better still, to this person or that, of more or less importance, whom I happened to know, I will jot it down. But it is understood from this moment that in this second part I shall not record my memories in the order of their dates—those who love me follow me.

Nevertheless, I should believe myself altogether lacking in gratitude if, casting aside this resolution for once only, I did not at once say to whom I owe the publication of my second novel, "Georgette; or, the Notary's Niece," that is to say my first successful novel, the book which commenced to draw me from the shade. Between ourselves, "The Child of My Wife" had left me entirely obscured in it. And as soon as I have finished writing about a publisher whose name is synony-

mous in my head and in my heart with all that is gracious, kindly and honest, I shall, killing two birds with one stone, sketch a few more of my publishers. This is a debt, not uniformly of gratitude, which I owe to these gentlemen.

You will remember that I began "Georgette" when I thought that I was fairly launched as a novelist, and that too soon finding out how baseless were my hopes, seeing that nobody bought my first novel, I had abandoned all intention of writing a second one. But true it is that "He who has drunk will drink," and still truer is it that "He who has written will write." The success of "Madame de Valnoir" at the Ambigu had, no doubt, been very pleasant; but, whilst retaining the wish to continue to write for the stage, I felt instinctively that it was not in that branch of literature that I should acquire a reputation.

Consequently, I set to work again on "Georgette." If "Georgette; or, the Notary's Niece" was not yet one of my good novels (I speak, of course, to those who allow that I have written good novels), it is evident, nevertheless, that it shows progress over its predecessor. The reason is that in "Georgette" observation plays a much larger part than imagination. I had begun to see, as I wrote, that, especially in humorous books, a novelist does much better to copy life than to invent it. Thus, one of the chapters in "Georgette," "A party at the Marais," is an exact description of a weekly

social gathering which I often used to attend. It was held, as a matter of fact, in the Marais, in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, at the house of a certain Madame de Saint-Phar.

What happy hours have I passed in that house! For although most of the habitual guests were people by no means amusing there were also some very pleasant people, especially amongst the ladies. There was dancing, there was music, there were parlor games, at Madame de Saint-Phar's house; and I had fallen in love with a certain young lady — she was of age — called Caroline M——, a tall, fair girl, who only wanted to be loved. Now it happened that one evening, when we were playing hide-and-seek, I don't know how it fell out, but Caroline and I had left Madame de Saint-Phar's apartment and had come together at the top of the staircase in a little garret, the door of which, by a fortunate chance, was standing open. For we were very anxious to hide ourselves in an effective manner, my lady-love and I; and we should be there still, perhaps, in that hospitable little room — for I'm hanged if anybody would have thought of looking for us there — if the person to whom the room belonged, a little glovemaker, had not discovered us. This grisette had gone downstairs to buy something for her supper and, as she had no reason to be afraid of thieves, she had left her door open. Imagine her surprise on returning to her lodging at finding a

young man and a young woman, sharing the same chair, and vowing eternal love to one another. A bourgeoise would have screamed, the glovemaker simply laughed, and, if I remember rightly, was good enough to light us downstairs to Madame de Saint-Phar's apartment, for we neither of us knew where we were. One loses count in the seventh heaven.

"Georgette; or, the Notary's Niece" is better, then, than "The Child of My Wife," but, like "The Child of My Wife," "Georgette" had to submit to the rebuffs of the publishers and, wearied with the fight, to retreat also to the cupboard. She remained there, indeed, even longer than the "Child"—for four years. During four years I willingly forgot my second novel. But I did not remain idle during these forty-eight months, I wrote melodramas and vaudevilles. One fine day, as I was selling the manuscript of a play to Barba—for I had entered into business relations with the celebrated Nicolas Barba of the Palais-Royal—I suddenly remembered "Georgette" and had the audacity to offer it to him.

"I am not publishing any more novels," he said, "but you can bring me yours and, if it's worth printing, I'll introduce you to a colleague who will publish it for you."

This colleague was Hubert, who was in business under the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal, a few doors from Nicolas Barba's shop.

I can still see Hubert's affable face when I called on him.

"Oh, so you're M. Paul de Kock. Be so good as to take a seat. I have read your novel and am much pleased with it. I'll put it in hand at once, as soon as we have come to terms. The terms must be low, as you see I can't pay a big price in a first transaction; but if, as I expect, 'Georgette' goes off well, I'll make you a more advantageous offer for your next book. Oh, I am sure we shall understand each other."

And I also was sure that we could come to an agreement. We were already agreed, since he had read my novel, which "had pleased him very much." Oh, he had said so himself. And not only was he going to "put it in hand" at once, but he was going to pay me for it. And he was asking me to write him another. Why this man was no publisher, he was a guardian angel, the guardian angel of young authors. If he hid his wings it was so as not to frighten them.

Ah, when I left his shop, carrying half the price of the sale of "Georgette" in my pocket — for we signed the agreement at once and he paid me half the price agreed upon on the spot (a price which I can tell you I did not bargain about) — the galleries of the Palais-Royal were not lofty enough for me, I struck the roofs with my forehead. Printed and paid for! I had a publisher who paid me. Later on in life I sold my novels

at a good price; "The Lover of the Moon," notably, a novel in ten volumes, was bought, cash down, by Baudry, for twenty thousand francs. Well, these twenty large notes which I spread out on my desk did not give me as much pleasure as the few louis which I received that day from Hubert. I wanted both to keep them forever — as the precious first fruits of a labor which I loved — and to spend them all at once in a feast of thanksgiving.

I did not spend them all at once, nor did I keep them; both love and friendship shared in my good fortune. Caroline M——, my lady-love of hide-and-seek, received a turquoise ring, and Maricot, Pâris, and two other of my friends, the brothers C——z, had an excellent dinner with me, at my expense, at Beauvilliers. We drank the health of "Georgette" and of Hubert. "Is that a newly married couple?" asked an indiscreet old man who was sitting at the next table. "Not yet, sir," answered Maricot very seriously, "Hubert and Georgette are only engaged at present, but their marriage will soon take place, and we hope that they will be very happy and that they will have many children." "So be it," said the curious old man. "So be it," repeated we in chorus.

After "Georgette" Hubert published "Gustave; or, the Worthless Fellow," and then "Frere Jacques," and then "My Neighbor Raymond,"

sly, in the caves, with the beautiful nymph Eucharis? Eh, eh, it can't be denied, in that respect Telemachus has a very close resemblance to my "Gustave." Well, the publication of this book raised a storm of alarmed prudery against me, not only in the newspapers, but also amongst certain of my acquaintances. What was I doing? Good heavens! Why Pigault's "La Folie Espagnole" was but a book by Ducray-Duminil as compared to "Gustave." L'Aretin had come to life again under the name of Paul de Kock. At the house of a friend of my mother, where I sometimes sacrificed myself to the delights of a game of boston at farthing points, a lady, who six weeks later was caught by her husband in "flagrante delicto" with one of her cousins, refused to sit opposite to me at the card table under the pretext that I horrified her. Elsewhere, a mature and very ugly lady, whom I had asked, out of sheer politeness, to dance with me, fainted when I took her hand. She said, next day, that it had seemed to her that my fingers were burning coals. Like Satan's fingers, neither more nor less. I laughed at all this nonsense, but one day, when a gentleman remarked, in my presence, in an artist's studio, that "If he were the government he would have 'Gustave' burned on the Place de Grêve as an obscene book, and would throw the author for the rest of his days into the deepest dungeon," my blood boiled so forcibly that that gentleman had reason

to regret his words. I gave him the most magnificent slap in the face that he had probably received in his life.

We exchanged cards. My adversary — whom we will call Durand, for he is living still and, if I am not mistaken, carries on his business somewhere — my adversary was an apothecary. Where does prudery not take shelter? The next day, at eight o'clock in the morning, we met in the Bois de Boulogne. Pâris and Maricot were my seconds. M. Durand's seconds must have been colleagues of his, at least they looked like people who were more accustomed to handle other instruments than pistols. For pistols had been decided upon for the duel.

I had been walking up and down for a quarter of an hour, waiting for the weapons to be loaded, and, although I was not anxious about the result of the duel, I was beginning to find the preliminaries much too long, when I saw Pâris and Maricot coming towards me, convulsed with laughter.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"The matter, indeed," cried Maricot. "Your duel is finished."

"Completely finished," said Pâris.

Et le combat finit, faute de combattants.

"What — M. Durand —?"

"M. Durand has taken to his heels."

"But his seconds."

"Prudent men, they took to theirs first."

"You're joking?"

"Not in the least. To begin with, when I took the pistols out of their case one of M. Durand's seconds — a little yellow chap — suddenly turned such a frightful green that neither Pâris nor myself were in the least surprised when he begged to be allowed to step aside for a moment. The other second showed less emotion and remained whilst I loaded the first pistol. But when I was beginning on the second he suddenly said: 'Perhaps Achille is ill' (it appears that the name of the gentleman who turned such a rich green is Achille), 'I must go and see if he doesn't want me." And, without waiting for any answer, he ran off in the same direction as the first. Then M. Durand, who from afar had seen his seconds disappear one after the other, came up. 'Where have my friends gone to?' 'My word, sir,' answered Pâris, 'we don't know, but we fancy that your friends are not very familiar with duelling, and that if you want this one to follow the usual course of such affairs, you will do well to reanimate their courage with a word of serious advice.' 'Oh,' muttered M. Durand, who, whilst Pâris was speaking, had been looking at the pistols with a haggard eye. 'Oh, the sight of these deadly weapons has upset my friends. Very well, gentlemen, be good enough to wait a minute or two.'"

Maricot paused in his story and burst out into a merry peal of laughter, in which Pâris joined heartily.

"And what then?" said I, laughing also — so contagious was their mirth. "I suppose there is no doubt but what M. Durand means to keep his word, and will bring back his seconds in due time."

"I'll wager he doesn't do anything of the sort," said Maricot. "Principal and seconds are far enough off by this time, unless all three of them have rolled into a ditch. You can very well imagine that after what M. Durand said, neither Pâris nor myself stayed where we were. We wanted to see what he was going to do, so we followed him at a distance."

"And you saw —"

"We saw your precious adversary fairly galloping after his friends, three or four hundred paces from this thicket, along an avenue which leads to Paris. When he caught up with the pair, he took them by the arm, and they all three bolted off together, without once looking round, in the direction of the capital."

"It's not possible!" I exclaimed, "that such poltroons can be found in France."

"It's so possible that I'm off now to put the pistols, which we left lying on the grass over there, back into their case. And then — you can trust my experience in these matters, Paul — without

waiting further we will set about getting some breakfast. After that, if you want to give your formidable enemy the usual quarter of an hour's grace, you may do so. But, trust me, it'll only be a waste of time. You know what our forefathers used to nickname apothecaries 'the kneeling musketeers.' M. Durand won't fight, he can't fight. Come, if apothecaries were to fight, who would work the syringe?"

This is the only duel that I ever fought, and I don't regret it, for I think duelling absurd, and I should have been very sorry indeed to have killed an apothecary. If this apothecary had killed me — to speak like Calino — I should have regretted it all my life.

However, I did not always get abuse and quarrels out of "Gustave; or, the Worthless Fellow." All readers are not alike, thank goodness. What displeases some, pleases others. And it is probable that "the others" were in the majority in this case, seeing that the first edition of my novel was sold out in four months.

At any rate, many ladies were very gracious to me after reading "Gustave." Ladies, evidently, who liked worthless fellows. There used to be ladies of that kind in those days.

And as to that I will tell you an interesting little story —

One morning, one of Hubert's clerks handed me a note which had been left for me the day

before at the shop, by a servant-girl. It ran as follows,—

MY AUTHOR: (Not knowing your address, I write to you at your publisher's.) I have read your "Gustave," and that has given me a desire to make your acquaintance. Will you come and sup with me the day after tomorrow at my house? There'll only be the two of us, as you may suppose. I know it's hardly the thing for women to invite men, but I am an honest tradeswoman and say what I mean frankly; so, if you feel like it, walk up and down in front of the Porte Saint-Martin the day after tomorrow, Thursday, at seven o'clock in the evening, when you'll see, coming from the Rue Saint-Martin, a servant, about fifty years old, wearing a Norman cap, and holding a feather-brush in one hand and a broom in the other. That'll be my servant. You'll go to her and you'll say, "I am the gentleman." She will take you to the right place. Ask yourself. If it will help you to make up your mind, I may tell you that I am a widow of twenty-eight, and all the men stare at me still. My Christian name is

JOSEPHINE.

A good middle-class woman. I could see from the style of the letter and the number of faults of spelling which adorned it that it had not been written by a duchess. But "a widow of twenty-eight," and "all the men stare at me!" I was young, fond of adventures of all kinds, and so I did not take much time in "asking" myself.

On the next day but one, at the appointed hour, I was at the appointed place.

The Norman servant soon arrived, carrying the emblems which had been agreed upon, a feather-brush and a broom. I walked up to her and whis-

pered in her ear, "I am the gentleman." She looked at me, and her eyes seemed to express astonishment. She had, no doubt, expected to see a very different sort of gentleman. However, she nodded and said,—

"All right! All right! If you're the gentleman, follow me; I'll walk in front."

"I should think you will walk ahead," said I to myself. Although it was dark, I did not at all care to chat on the way with this old hag of a peasant woman.

We did not go far, only to where the Square des Arts et Metiers now stands in the Rue Saint-Martin. The house was entered by an alley, with a cookshop on one side and a grocery on the other.

"Here we are," said the servant. "Follow me a bit longer."

"Is it high up?" I asked, as I laid my hand on the balustrade of a dark, dirty and winding staircase.

"No, it's on the first landing. Are you frightened of going upstairs?"

"I am not frightened, but I can't breathe."

"I can quite understand that."

Now I should like to know why "she could quite understand that." There was no doubt about it, the old woman could not stand me at any price.

She brought me through an antechamber into a parlor, which, without being elegant, spoke of decent competency on the part of its owner. It

was furnished with a suite of mahogany, upholstered in velvet, a clock with a copper group upon it, standing between two china vases filled with artificial flowers, and there were some family portraits on the walls.

"I'll go and warn madame that you're here," said the servant.

I looked at the family portraits. Vulgar and ugly faces, and what bad painting! These pictures must have cost about fifteen francs each, including the frames. I hold that one can judge of people's standing by the pictures which they hang up in their homes. Madame Josephine must be of all vulgarians the most vulgar.

But now the door through which the servant had gone out opened again. I was just looking at the portrait of a huge individual with a collar beard, and a gold chain as thick as one's little finger, which twice encircled his waistcoat — the husband of my widow, no doubt. At the sound of the door I turned round, and found myself face to face with Madame Josephine. She was a big, motherly woman, not ugly, no, rather fresh-looking, but so fat, so very fat. Oh, there could be no doubt that the gentleman with the gold chain was her defunct spouse.

Did my face show the vague fear that I experienced at the sight of such corpulence? Be that as it may, it is certain that Madame Josephine made a slight grimace when she saw me.

There was a moment's silence, sufficiently awkward for both of us. At last she said,—

"You are M. Paul de Kock?"

"Yes, madame."

"It's funny!"

"What is funny?"

"Well, from your book I had thought you — well, I had imagined you quite other than you are."

"Oh, indeed! And what sort of a man did you think I was? Tell me all about it, madame."

"Mercy, I believed — I thought — "

"You thought I should turn out a big young fellow of six feet, with broad shoulders, a quantity of hair, and a bluebeard."

"Oh, I didn't absolutely want a bluebeard, but you — you — you can't be in very good health, eh?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, madame. I am hardly ever ill."

"That's singular, you are so thin. But you must admit, at least, that you haven't good sight."

Madame Josephine alluded to the spectacles which I had worn from the time I was a youth, and which I wore up to the age of thirty-five. It was only in 1828 that, my sight having greatly improved, I was able to dispense with an artificial aid which, I admit, does not improve one's personal appearance.

I bit my lips. My widow irritated me with

her questions. It was no amorous woman that I had before me, but the president of a board of health.

"Goodness gracious, madame," said I, sharply enough, "it's true that I am very short-sighted, but my spectacles don't prevent me from eating or from courting the ladies, and if I usually keep them on at table, I also take them off elsewhere."

Madame Josephine burst out laughing,

"You are quite right," she said, "and it's stupid of me to be surprised because you don't look like a Hercules. There are men who look like Hercules, and who, none the less, are not particularly vigorous. My husband, for instance. To look at him, one would have thought him capable of knocking down a wall with one blow of his fist, whilst, as a matter of fact he couldn't even knock down a partition. I could roll him up in one hand when I wished to. Besides, I suppose an author needn't be built like a market-porter. Let's go to supper, mon petit. Are you hungry?"

"Hum! Hum!"

"Oh, your appetite will come whilst you're eating. Come along to supper."

So saying, Madame Josephine dragged me—there's no other word for it—into the dining-room, where supper was laid. There was a roast goose, big enough to satisfy a regiment. Near the table was a basket filled with bottles.

"Do you like goose?" asked the widow.

"Hum! Hum!"

"Hum! Hum! again. Perhaps you would have preferred a turkey?"

"Oh—"

"Don't mind saying so. If you prefer turkey I'll tell Gervaise to go downstairs and choose one for us, or perhaps a chicken. Yes, eh? a chicken would go better. I say, Gervaise."

So because I had no wish either for a goose or for a turkey, a chicken was to be chosen for me. These words were a revelation. The cookshop which I had noticed on coming into the house belonged to Madame Josephine. I had made the conquest of a rôtisseuse. And the conquest was an imaginary one into the bargain—for as a matter of fact—Oh, my spectacles had chilled my fat shopkeeper's ardor.

Gervaise came running in. She smiled ironically on hearing that she was to substitute a less substantial bird for that which had been served. "No breath, no appetite, what a wretched acquaintance madame has made to be sure," so said the smile.

The fact is that the more I looked at Madame Josephine, the less—though it was eating my own words—did I feel anxious to show her that a man may wear spectacles and yet be a very ardent lover. This rôtisseuse was not a woman, she was a phenomenon. She was the Hottentot Venus of the Rue Saint-Martin. It would take

one at least an hour merely to cover her hand with kisses.

How was I to extricate myself from this difficulty?

She had made me sit down beside her.

"We can drink a drop whilst waiting for the chicken," said she, filling my glass to the brim.

"Oh, thanks," I murmured, "but we've plenty of time."

"Won't you touch glasses with me?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon. But it's not my habit before eating to — to —"

"Oh, indeed. Well, I can tipple a bottle without inconvenience while they're putting bread in the soup. Drink it up. My wine is good, it's macon. And so your business is making books? Does it bring in anything, a business of that kind? No, eh? There's more money to be made in trade. But where do you find all the nonsense that you shove into your books?"

"I do not find it. People give it to me."

"What sort of people?"

"Oh, an infinite number of people whom I meet everywhere. Oh, there's no lack of persons to supply me with plots and characters for my novels."

"Dear, dear, just fancy! I had imagined that you simply copied your novels out of old books which you bought at the second-hand bookstalls on the quays. By changing them a bit, by freshening them up —"

So she was stupid into the bargain. Not only was she enormous, this cookshop-keeper, but she was stupid. My mind was soon made up.

Gervaise came back.

"Madame, there's no more chicken, so I have brought up half a turkey instead."

"Very well. Very well. So much the worse, eh, little chap. You'll eat turkey for once in a way, won't you?"

"Certainly, madame, but first—"

So saying, I rose from the table.

"What's the matter?" said Madame Josephine. "Do you want anything?"

"Yes; if you don't mind, I should like to be alone for—five minutes—in your drawing-room."

"In my drawing-room! What do you want to go into my drawing-room for?"

"Because it's just the place for me to write a few lines in my pocket-book."

"Oh, it's to write. I had thought that—"

"Please excuse me. You see, in my line of business, when a thought strikes me it is imperative that I should note it down at once."

"Very well; go, go. I'll carve this half turkey whilst you are jotting down your thoughts."

To enter the drawing-room—where I had left my hat—to clear it at a bound, and the antechamber at another, to get down the staircase four steps at a time, to bolt up the alley and, once in

the street, to rush off at the top of my speed, all that was for me a matter of a few seconds.

My rôtisseuse could hardly have got the wing off the half turkey before I had reached the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, vowing, by all the saints, never in the future to let myself be so easily lured by the billets-doux of good shopwomen.

One must be frank, but not too frank.

And Madame Josephine was really much too frank.

Having in these retrospective remarks about my various publishers spoken about Hubert, I must say a few words about Nicolas Barba, in spite of the fact that, in consequence of certain disreputable occurrences — about which I don't care to speak, which took place some years before his death, and in which, to my thinking, he was badly mixed up — our relations were suddenly severed.

For the rest, Nicolas Barba was a good fellow; Big Barba, as people used to call him, and rightly so, seeing that in stature and bulk he was a giant. He was a bit of a gossip, a bit of a boaster, but often witty, both as a boaster and a gossip. Pigault-Lebrun was his idol, and, indeed, it is so rare to hear a tradesman express any gratitude to those who have made his fortune that we could listen without weariness to Big Barba, as he kept on talking about "his dear author and friend." And he did more than merely talk about his friendship for Pigault, he gave him a practical proof of it by

paying him all his life, beginning from the day on which he published his fortieth volume, an annual income of twelve hundred francs. Twelve hundred francs. The smallness of the sum makes you smile, but forty years ago that seemed a very respectable sum.

I frequently met Pigault-Lebrun, when I was a young man, at Nicolas Barba's house in the Cour des Fontaines, but he always affected such coldness towards me that, in spite of myself — for I held his talent in the very highest esteem — I was forced to limit my relations with him to those of simple politeness. However, one day in the autumn of 1832, as I was walking with my wife at La Celle-Saint-Cloud, where he was then living, I accepted an offer made to me by Nicolas Barba to visit Pigault-Lebrun. He was then quite an old man — he must have been about eighty — but he was vigorous still. On this occasion he received me very cordially.

"You are carrying on my work," said he to me. "I don't read your novels, it's long since I read anything, but I am told that they are very full of fun. That's right, make people laugh; it's much more difficult to do than to make people cry."

Nicolas Barba was for many years a constant visitor to my modest dwelling. When, after 1830, I had bought my first cottage in the Romainville woods, hardly a week passed without his coming and spending at least a day with me. He used to

come on foot from the Palais-Royal, leaning on his crook-handled stick, with which, to amuse my children, he used to rifle the trees of the neighboring fields of nuts and apples — at the risk of getting into trouble with the country constable. He used to tell my wife and me his life and his adventures as a soldier. He had been a chasseur in the Boulonnais regiment, a circumstance of which he was not a little proud. He used to tell us of his adventures with Prince Jêrome, escapades which supplied the material for the famous novel called "Mon oncle Thomas."

A cloud came over the sky — a cloud which too soon broke into a tempest over my head — and farewell to Nicolas Barba, a last farewell. I was sorry for it, for I loved him. Perhaps, later on, he thought also with regret of my little house, of my children, of our chats. Well, well! I had already learned by experience that vows of friendship are no more graven in brass than are vows of love, and for years as I passed before Nicolas Barba's shop I had but to turn aside my head. I may call that a periodic twist of the neck. It is not a mortal affection,

I had but few business relations with Ladvocat, the famous publisher of a quantity of memoirs from which he extracted heaps of gold — which he was stupid enough to scatter to the winds. All I did for him was to write an article for his book, "Les Cent-et-un," but I take pleasure in thinking

of him as a pleasant gentleman, who neither in voice nor in manners had anything of the tradesman about him. And is not this praise, in itself, a criticism? Would it not have been better for Ladvocat had he been less a gentleman and more of a man of business, and thus have escaped becoming a dressmaker as a last resource? For, as we all know, this is how Ladvocat crowned his career. He passed from the publishing business into a dressmaking shop. There is no evidence that he in person took the measures for the dresses which were cut out in his workshops, but it is quite certain that he used to preside over their making, and that he used to boast of it.

I have said that it was at his house that I had one day the honor of meeting Châteaubriand. Another day, whilst I was talking in his shop with Merle — the author of "Le Ci-devant Jeune Homme" and of "Le Bourgmestre de Saardam," besides being the editor of the theatrical sheet "La Quotidienne," and who, like Martainville, was both a rabid Royalist and a writer of talent — I saw a man come in, a rather tall man, with very bright eyes, somewhat big nose, and a satirical mouth. Ladvocat, leaving Merle and me, rushed up to him with both hands stretched out, and cried,—

"My dear old Nodier! How do you do?"

"Do you know Charles Nodier?" asked Merle of me.

"Not at all."

"Well, he knows you, and has known you for a long while."

"Bah. Who told you that?"

"He himself."

"And how does he know me? Where has he seen me?"

"Somewhere where you often went formerly, it appears. Wait a bit, he'll tell you about it himself."

Merle went up to Nodier and, drawing his attention to me with a look, whispered some words in his ear. Thereupon the author of "La Fée aux Miettes" came up to me and said,—

"Merle has told you the truth, M. Paul de Kock, I have had the pleasure of knowing you for the last twenty years."

"Indeed, sir? And would you be so kind as to tell me—"

"Where we used to meet—not once, but a hundred, two hundred times. Very willingly. This is 1833, is it not. Very well, in the days when the Boulevard du Temple was still the Boulevard du Temple, that is to say, the most typical place in Paris, with its booths of mountebanks, who never left the spot, its wax-works shows, its freaks and its menageries, don't you remember a certain clown, half jocrisse, half harlequin, whose tricks were the funniest things one could imagine?"

"Zozo?"

"Zozo. That's it, Zozo. Well, isn't it true that from 1810 to 1820, whilst you were still quite a young man, you used to be one of Zozo's most faithful admirers?"

"Quite true. I lived in the neighborhood, and I don't think that two days ever passed without my going to listen to the funny fellow."

"Well, though I didn't live in the Marais, I, too, was fond of Zozo — what am I saying, I worshipped him — I never let two days pass without going to split my sides with laughing at his fooleries. Well, as one of his audience, I got to know the faces of all the other spectators who, by laughing as heartily as myself, seemed to me the most intelligent people there. So, it's not extraordinary that when, a month or two ago, Merle pointed you out to me at the theatre, I should have exclaimed, 'That Paul de Kock! Why I have known him for centuries! And though I have never exchanged one word with him, I'll wager he's a very good fellow. He knows how to laugh.'"

A publisher who had great points of resemblance, both in manners and speech, with Ladvocat was Charlieu, the publisher of the illustrated quarto edition of my novels. M. de Charlieu was typical of the aristocratic tradesman. He had horses and carriages, a town house and a house in the country. He had a large private fortune of his

own and was very successful in business, and so could indulge in luxuries without being charged with extravagance. He owned large estates in the south, and never failed to send me, three or four times every winter, some magnificent potted game or succulent pâtés de foies gras, stuffed with black truffles, which were found on his estate. And I won't deny that I was very pleased to be on business terms with a publisher who had truffles on his estate, and who sent me some in pâtés de foies gras.

I am fond of good living, and I admit it. Is it a vice? Yes, no doubt, in the eyes of those who are not. And I will say further that I don't know anything more irritating at table than to see a lot of people who like nothing and will eat nothing. What does that mean, after all? Nothing, but that their stomachs are out of order. And to be careful because one's stomach is out of order shows prudence, but not a virtuous disposition.

It's the same with those persons who, when you ask them to cut in for a game of bouillote or whist, say primly, "No, thank you. I never play cards. I have never touched a card in my life. Oh, I have a horror of gambling!" Beware of such Puritans; prick them to the quick, and you'll find what niggards they are. Their pretended horror is far less than is their fear of losing a five-franc piece. Many times have I repeated

what Voltaire said to a lady, to young men who thought themselves very clever in posing before me as enemies and despisers of card playing, "You don't play cards? Well, I'm sorry for you. You are preparing a very sad old age for yourself."

Gambling, no doubt, as my stepfather understood it, has its dangers, but — but here I am gossiping, moralizing in my fashion, all in connection with the sketch of one of my publishers. Let us hasten on to another, to Hippolyte Souverain, a big publisher also, in his day, who published many of the works of our most celebrated authors, Balzac, Dumas, Soulié. Souverain was a man of intelligence, but keen! very keen, arch-keen! Here is an example of his keenness. The first novel in regard to which I did business with him was "Ce Monsieur." It was to be in two volumes; at least, I had written matter for two volumes, and our agreement was on that basis. So I was not a little surprised, on correcting the proofs of "Ce Monsieur," to find that Souverain was making arrangements to make a three volume book of it. I went to his office.

"Yes," said he, "'Ce Monsieur' will be in three volumes. But what does that matter to you?"

"It matters — the matter is that I sold you only two volumes, and that I am surprised —"

"Surprised at what? Let's argue it out, if you please. Did I or did I not pay you the price you asked me for your two volumes?"

"You did."

"Very well then, because like a clever miller I can make three millings of the corn I have bought with my hard cash instead of two, where's the harm? What is mine is mine, and I am entitled to make the most profitable use I can of it. I defy you to prove to the contrary."

I made no answer. For all that, good old Souverain's arguments appeared to me to be of a very specious nature, and when we next did business together I took care to act, as I thought, in a way which would secure to me my due share of all the "millings" which he would get from my corn!

This time it was "L'Amoureux transi" that I sold to him. "In three volumes," said I, as I handed him the manuscript.

"All right," answered he without turning a hair. "So I'll pay you for three volumes."

And pay me he did, but out of my three volumes he made four. As a publisher, Souverain was decidedly too skilful a miller for me. I declared myself beaten.

A clever story-teller, for he had travelled much, a charming talker — except when he was talking about certain religious and social matters which are not at all in my line — Souverain, although he no longer publishes for me, has continued to be a welcome guest at my house. Two or three years ago, he mentioned to me that Alexandre Dumas fils was desirous of making my acquaintance.

"I should like nothing better," I said, "than to make Dumas' acquaintance."

"Then will you come and lunch with me one of these days?"

"With pleasure."

A week later I received a note asking me to come on the next day but one, at twelve o'clock, to the Notta restaurant at the corner of the boulevard and the Faubourg Poissonnière. I kept the appointment and found Souverain waiting for me, and very soon afterwards M. Alexandre Dumas fils joined us. I pass over the compliments which he was good enough to address to me — courtesy as well as intelligence are innate in the Dumas family, as I knew from the few conversations I had had with Dumas the elder — but what I will not pass over, because it amused me very much, is the study which Dumas made of me at table, whilst I was making one of him. I have always had a good appetite, and — thank Heaven — have one still, and you will remember that I have confessed that I'm just a little fond of good cheer. The consequence is that when I am asked to lunch, I do lunch. Souverain, as the host, gave me a free hand in ordering the lunch on this occasion, and I ordered what I liked — Ostend oysters, fillet aux truffles, a lobster salad, a salmi of partridges, asparagus en branches, and for wines, some sauterne to begin with followed by some old burgundy. Dumas fils, who ate as little as a bird and tem-

pered his wine with some mineral water, which he had brought with him in his carriage, watched me at work, smiling and exclaiming every now and then,—

"That's it, oh! that's just it. That's the true Paul de Kock, a bon-vivant, such as I had imagined him. It's superb."

But where the mirth of my young confrère really broke out was later on, when at desert, he — and Souverain as well — having said that they had had enough, I remarked that as for me I shouldn't mind a trifle more, a slice of plum pudding with rum, for instance, and that to help the cheese down I would willingly drink a glass of champagne.

"Champagne! plum pudding," cried Alexandre Dumas fils, "Come, now I have my Paul de Kock complete."

I said nothing, because — I am sure of it — he had not spoken with any evil intention, but, in all truth, what a splendid opportunity the author of "La Dame aux Camélias" had given me had I wanted to retort.

I might have said, "Yes, sir, you have your Paul de Kock complete at seventy, just as I have my Dumas fils already complete at forty. Each shows his own character according to his epoch. I go on eating and drinking; you have already stopped eating and drinking. And, passing from physical to intellectual matters, from the stomach to the heart, I would be willing to wager that here

also my old age has the advantage over your youth, for I still believe in all that it is sweet and comforting to believe in in this world; whilst you, if I am to judge from your writings, refuse to believe that there is anything good left."

But, I repeat it, M. Alexandre Dumas fils had been too amiable towards me for me to appear vexed at his remark on my personality, somewhat ironical as it was. It's only today — in mild revenge — that I will allow myself to say something about him. Between ourselves, I had fancied that meeting Paul de Kock, Dumas fils, were it but out of curiosity for the past, would have been interested in hearing the old novelist talk; but, as a matter of fact, it was he who talked the whole time, all through lunch. I put up with it all the more readily since he spoke very well, and I am no great conversationalist. But when I next saw Souverain, and he asked me how I had enjoyed myself at his feast, I said, "Oh! the feast was excellent, and M. Dumas was charming. But, tell me, I pray, why did he want to make my acquaintance? He did not let me say two words. He would have made my acquaintance just as well if you had simply put my portrait in my place at table."

Of Baudry the publisher I have nothing to say, except that he was the first to pay me for my works prices which were proportionate to the profits he anticipated making from them. But

as I had not been accustomed to this kind of treatment, up to that time, it seemed all the more pleasant, and well deserves grateful acknowledgment on my part in these pages.

I will also pass over Lachapelle, who, from 1842 to 1844, published several of my novels. I remember very little about him, except his aversion to part with his crowns and his strange physical condition. In consequence of a terrible illness he had had, his bones were transparent; one could read a newspaper through his body. I recollect little else about him.

I have more to say about Alexandre Cadot, a worthy, excellent man, for whom I have nothing but praise. And my son, in contracting a warm friendship with him — a friendship which during ten years has never wavered one instant — has proved to me that my esteem for Cadot was rightly placed, for Henry is not prodigal with his friendship. I have only one reproach to make to Cadot — not as a publisher, but as a host — and that is, that when one dines at his house one is kept at table for six hours at a stretch. I remember being present at one dinner, amongst others, in his apartments in the Rue Serpente, together with my son and my daughter, Messieurs de Foudras, Paul Duplessis, and Xavier de Montépin. We sat down to table at six o'clock, and at midnight, when coffee might reasonably have been expected, a truffled chicken was served. How could one resist

the attractions of a truffled chicken, even after exercising one's knife and fork for six hours. We were astonished at its appearing on the table, but we ate of it, we ate a lot of it, and Paul Duplessis, a novelist of talent, whose recent death was such a sad one[1] — Paul Duplessis, who, like me, was a good trencherman, deserves special mention for the way in which he rivalled me in tackling the fowl. But my son, who at table somewhat follows the school of M. Dumas fils, and satisfies his appetite almost immediately and who is never thirsty, could not help exclaiming,—

"My word, Cadot, this isn't a dinner you're giving us, it's a trap you have laid for us. You want to send us home tomorrow as corpses — dead of indigestion."

At any rate, the trap was not a cruel one, and I was joking just now when I accused Cadot of feeding his guests too well. It is certainly better to do that than not to feed them at all, as so many hosts that I know are in the habit of doing. I won't name them, so they need not be afraid. I don't bear grudges of that sort.

What shall I say of Sartorious, my last publisher. For he also was a good and honest man. I say "was," for he died recently, died like Hubert, like Nicolas Barba, like Ladvocat, like Charlieu, Baudry, Lachapelle, Potter, and another whom I have not named and shall not name, holding it

[1] He died suddenly, in the street, of aneurismal rupture (P. de K.).

useless, if not painful, to speak of a man who in return for the fortune which he owed to me — a fortune, by the way, which he turned to no good account — never did me anything but injuries. Of all the publishers with whom I have had relations only two are left whose hands I can shake, Cadot[1] and Souverain. This is one of the penalties of a long career — the ranks thin out around one; friends and enemies disappear. And it is enough to remember one's friends without doing one's enemies the honor of a single thought.

[1] My father wrote these lines towards the end of 1869. Some months later, in April, 1870, of the two last of his publishers whose hands he could still shake, one died, still young, Alexandre Cadot, wept by all those who, like me, had intimately known him (Henry de Kock).

CHAPTER VII

THAT period of my life when I was engaged in writing pieces for the stage of the Opéra-Comique is one that I remember with the greatest pleasure, for work that is congenial affords perhaps the purest gratification that it is given to man to experience here below — and this was essentially congenial to me for I have always been extremely fond of music. A musician myself, how could I help being happy amongst musicians?

For, reader, as you have not previously been made aware of the fact, let me now inform you, not without some vanity (one is always very fond of his minor talents) that I have not only written the words, but have produced the music also of a quantity of songs and ballads which were sung with great success for many years at charity concerts and also at the cafés chantants.

I may mention especially "Le Concert-monstre," which was glorified by being made a quadrille for a full orchestra by the famous maestro Jullien, at the concerts in the Jardin Turc, and also "Le Maître d'école" and "Le Caissier," which used to be sung with so much gayety by Levassor and Joseph Kelm.

To return to my work for the Opéra-Comique; it is an unfortunate fact that I was not often lucky in my choice of collaborators, and the consequence is that out of twenty acts which I wrote for this theatre only one has kept its place on the repertoire — "Le Muletier," which I did in collaboration with Hérold. Even this has not been played often for some time past, although it is a pearl. A pearl as music, I mean, of course,— a pearl of which my libretto is nothing but the shell. And Nestor Roqueplan — whilst he was manager of the Opéra-Comique — was of the same opinion as myself and all connoisseurs as to the musical merits of "Le Muletier," for, differing from his predecessors, he mounted it at its revival in a manner worthy of its illustrious author.

My first comic opera, written in 1818, is called "une Nuit au château," for which Mengal, my violin master, wrote the music. Certainly the music was not on a par with that of "Le Muletier," but the "une Nuit au château" had undoubtedly its good points, and it was honored with a cordial welcome. It was acted by Juliet fils, Huet, Madame Desbrosses, and Madame Boulanger. My next piece was "Le Philosophe en voyage," a comic opera in three acts, written in collaboration with the composers Frederic Kreube and Pradher. Alas, a hundred times alas! — they are both dead and so I may speak out — these were two composers who could boast of not possessing a grain

of talent. Yes — Pradher had the talent of being the husband of a delightful artist, as a singer and as a woman; a gem, to whom Anna Thillon, later, could alone be compared. However, as the piece — so it appeared — was interesting, "Le Philosophe en voyage" ran for a hundred nights, but by cutting out every night a duo, a trio or a quartette, it ended by being played as a comedy, which was only moderately flattering to Kreube and Pradher, if I, for my part, had no serious objections to make to the proceeding. "Les Infideles," a one-act piece, for which Mengal again wrote the music, followed, and then in the same year, 1823, "Le Muletier," sung by Lemonnier, Vizentini, Fereol, Madame Boulanger, and the ravishing Madame Pradher. What a success it was. I was nearly mad with joy, although I readily gave three-quarters of the merit of the triumph to Hérold, for, I must admit, the public, at the first performance of "Le Muletier," had thought the piece rather fast. A piece taken from one of La Fontaine's fables — just think of it! Oh, if the charm of the music had not softened their hearts this good public might have got furiously angry with me. We were very prudish in Paris under the Restoration, prudish in the city for appearance's sake, for at the court they did not affect so much rigor. And the proof of this is — and it consoled me for the attacks which were made against me for having written so fast a libretto as

that of "Le Muletier" — that the piece was acted in 1825, by royal command, at St. Cloud, and that nobody there complained of it. On the contrary, they not only applauded the music, but they deigned also to laugh at the words. I heard that the Duchesse de Berry especially found the piece very amusing. A princess in heart and mind was on my side, and so, from that time onwards, I could afford to laugh at the hypocritical blushes of middle-class gentlemen, and at those of the good ladies, their wives.

A souvenir which relates to this subject. As I say, I was much pleased with the kind of protection which the Duchesse de Berry had deigned to accord to my "Muletier," and I did not conceal the fact. One day in the summer of 1826 or 1827, I don't recall exactly which year, Merle, who, as I have mentioned, was a staunch Royalist, met me in the foyer of the Opéra-Comique, and said to me,—

"What are you doing tomorrow, Paul de Kock?"

"Tomorrow? Why, I don't know. Have you anything to propose?"

"An excursion. Rather a long excursion, but with a good cabriolet and a good horse we can cover fourteen leagues easily enough."

"Fourteen leagues! Heavens, where do you want to take me to?"

"To Rosny, to see the house of a lady of

whom you are very fond, the château of her Royal Highness, Madame la Duchesse de Berry. We will start at six in the morning; by nine o'clock we shall be at Triel, where we will stop for breakfast and give our horse a rest; at eleven we will start off again and we shall arrive at Rosny between two and three o'clock. I have a letter from the Count de Mesnars, first equerry to her royal highness, which will open all the doors to me."

"But the duchess?"

"The duchess is not at her château; so we shall be quite free to visit the apartments, the chapel, the park, and even the surrounding country; for as we can't return until the next day for fear of killing our horse, we will dine and sleep at the inn. Well, what do you say about it?"

"Why — why, I say that I accept your invitation."

"Bravo! Well, then, tomorrow, at my house, at six sharp."

Now, agreeable as had seemed to me the excursion proposed by Merle, I had not accepted his invitation without some hesitation, and this hesitation was due to an aversion which I used to feel as a young man — and which I have felt up to the day I am writing these lines, which shows that it is deeply rooted in me — an aversion to travelling. It may perhaps be ridiculous, but I have never liked to leave my Penates. The long-

est excursion I ever took — I was twenty-three at the time — was to Beaugency, near Orleans, thirty-six leagues from Paris. I cannot help it. I hate moving, I hate inns, I hate the coaches. "But," you will cry, "one does not travel by coach now. People go by railway nowadays." Well, I hate trains even more, if it's possible for me to do so, than coaches. Brrr! — what grunting, grumbling, blowing, whistling, spitting machines! What blinding dust! What filthy smoke! To say nothing of the prospect of an explosion, or of running off the rails. When for two summers my son was living at Gournay, near Chelles, it was duty alone and because he was my son, that compelled me to go and see him.

Beaugency first, then Rosny. Those are my Hercules' Pillars.

"What," said Nestor Roqueplan to me one day, "have you never wished to see Holland, the country of your father, of your brothers?"

"No."

"Have you never thought of visiting England, where you are almost as much admired as Dickens?"

"No."

"Or Russia, where your name is as well-known as it is in France?"

"No."

"You have at least seen the sea at Havre or at Dieppe?"

"I have never seen anything but the Seine — from the quays — and here and there her associate, the Marne, when I have been walking at Joinville or at Nogent."

"It's incredible."

Roqueplan was laughing; but suddenly growing serious he added,—

"Well, you're quite right; Paul de Kock, the Parisian writer par excellence, Paul de Kock should never absent himself from Paris. Upon reflection, it even surprises me that you should have the audacity to spend the summer in the Romainville woods; your only country-seat should be a dozen flower-pots on the window-sills of your apartment in the Boulevard Saint-Martin. When you die — may the day be far off — we must inscribe on your tomb, 'Here lies Paul de Kock, who was born in Paris, who died in Paris, and who never left Paris.' And if Paris is as grateful to you as it ought to be, this epitaph will be inscribed on a tomb erected at its expense."

I don't ask as much as Roqueplan desired for me, believing that my children love me too well to allow anybody else to provide a resting-place for my remains; but what I do say is that I expect to end my days there, where I have always lived — in spite of the fact that the changes which have been made during the last few years have made a new city, which has not, in my eyes, the charm of the old one.

But that is progress, and progress pleases the young if it vexes the old. And as in the natural order of things it is the old who go first, the young, in working for themselves, are quite right not to trouble themselves about the regrets of the old people.

To return to my journey to Rosny.

Quite a journey for me, fourteen leagues. And what upset me the most in the prospect of this journey, was the necessity of sleeping away from home. On the other hand, it is true, I was going to see the favorite residence of an amiable princess. And then I was certain not to be bored, with Merle as a travelling companion. And then again, I had given him my promise to go.

At six o'clock in the morning I was at his house; at five minutes past six we got into our carriage; at nine o'clock we were at Triel, where we breakfasted; at eleven o'clock we set out again, and at half-past two we alighted at Rosny. Oh, up till then nothing had gone wrong. Having left our horse and cab at the inn we hastened to the château, and whilst my companion presented his "Open Sesame" to the porter I began to stretch my legs in a magnificent avenue formed of a double row of venerable trees.

"Paul de Kock."

Merle was calling me from the threshold of the porter's lodge.

"What's up?"

"We're in bad luck today, my friend."

"Can't we go in?"

"We can't, because madame is at the château. She arrived about an hour ago, with several ladies of her suite and her head-almoner, the Bishop of Amiens."

"Oh, indeed. Well, then, I suppose we must go back to Paris."

"No, wait. The porter has gone with my letter to ask for the Count de Mesnars' orders."

"Oh, if the Count de Mesnars is there?"

"He is, and he'll tell us if we can at least take a turn in the park. Hang it! if her highness's grand almoner wasn't at the château I'm sure there would be no difficulty about our getting in. But just fancy, a bishop—"

"Wouldn't like to run the risk of meeting two profane writers such as we are. I can quite understand that."

"I'm quite sorry, my dear De Kock, for having brought you so far for nothing, but madame was not expected back to Rosny before next week, and—"

"Don't say anything about it, my friend. It's not your fault. But isn't that the porter over there, coming back?"

"Yes, so it is. And that's M. de Mesnars following him. M. de Mesnars has taken the trouble of coming to us. That's a good sign."

Merle hastened to meet the first equerry. He

talked with him for some minutes. The conversation was to our advantage for, as soon as M. de Mesnars had left him, my comrade beckoned to me to come up, with a radiant look on his face.

"Well?"

"Well! We can go all over the place, my dear fellow — all over the place. The princess herself wished it. M. de Mesnars would not have dared, on his own authority, to grant us permission for anything more than a walk in the park, but when madame heard that we had come expressly from Paris on purpose to see her house, she said: 'My presence here must not stand in the way of their pleasure.' M. de Mesnars asked who was with me and I told him your name."

"And didn't he seem shocked?"

"Not in the least. They're all witty people here."

As he spoke Merle took my arm, and proudly we walked up to the château. We were shown all over it by a footman, with the exception of the room occupied at that moment by the princess and her suite. This room, her boudoir, served also as a studio, for, as may or may not be known, her royal highness painted, and painted like a veritable artist. We visited the drawing-rooms, the dining-room, the library, the bedrooms of the duchess, of the Duc de Bordeaux, and of his sister, mademoiselle. All these apartments were furnished elegantly rather than sumptuously; one felt

everywhere that this was the abode of a woman of taste. But what pleased me particularly was a picture gallery, where I noticed a superb, full-length portrait of the princess, a masterpiece.

From the apartments we went to the chapel, where stood the monument which contained the heart of the Duc de Berry. After that, our guide having taken leave of us, we were able, as fancy guided us, to wander under the shady trees of the park, in the winding avenues of the English garden, discovering at every turn some new view to admire, little thinking that our good star reserved for us a still more agreeable surprise.

Six o'clock had struck and it was time for us to get back to our inn. It was long since breakfast, and we were hungry.

We were walking along a path bordered with hornbeam trees, which we thought would bring us out into the principal driveway to the château, when suddenly there appeared, at a stone's throw from us, coming out of the avenue to the left, a group of ladies who were walking in our direction.

"The duchess," murmured Merle.

"By Jove! Let's go back."

"No. It would look like running away. You can't surely object to seeing the original at close quarters after having so much admired the portrait."

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, here we are. Let us stay here!"

"All right."

The Duchesse de Berry, accompanied by the Comtesse d'Hautefort, the Marquise de Bethisy, and two other ladies whose names I have forgotten (though Merle, who knew the French court by heart, told me later who they were), came walking towards us. We went to the side of the road to make way for them to pass, and remained standing in respectful attitudes with our hats in our hands.

Madame, who must have been about thirty at that time, was not pretty in the literal acceptation of the word; she was attractive. She possessed that grace which rivals beauty. But what struck me most about her was her toilet. Whilst all the ladies of her suite were dressed for their walk in the park as for a reception at the Tuileries, in silk or in velvet, the duchess wore a simple gown of cotton print, such as little shopkeepers wear in Paris when seated behind their counters, and, an original detail, there was a silk apron over the dress.

A royal highness in an apron! I had not expected to see that.

I am not conceited enough to think that she had come on purpose to see us because she had been told that the author of "Le Muletier," that play which had amused her, was one of the visitors to her domain, and yet, if my spectacles did not betray me, I can certify that madame looked

at both of us with some curiosity as she passed us, saying in a ringing voice,—

"Well, gentlemen, how do you like my Rosny?"

"Charming, madame," replied Merle, "like everything else belonging to your royal highness."

"Well, you must come and see it again. The park is magnificent in the autumn. Au revoir, gentlemen."

With these words the duchess went on, followed by her ladies, and Merle and I pursued our way, highly pleased with this meeting, and vying with each other in praises of madame's distinguished bearing, the charm of her voice, the expression of her face, affable and refined at once, and the simplicity of her dress. Oh, I could not forget the cotton-print gown and the little silk apron.

Three or four months later I twice had occasion within a month — the first time smiling, the second time sighing — to remember meeting with the Duchesse de Berry in the park of Rosny.

The first time was in June, 1830, one evening when the Duc d'Orleans was receiving the King of France and the King of Naples at the Palais-Royal.

I was passing through the square at about nine o'clock. Somebody pointed out to me one of the gala-carriages, which at that moment were entering the courtyard of the palace, and said,—

"Madame is in that carriage."

"Not with her little apron on," I thought.

The second time was after the July days, "The three glorious days," as they used to be called then, when I heard that the Duchesse de Berry had left France to follow Charles X to Holyrood.

"She'll never walk again in her well-beloved Rosny with her little apron on," said I.

And, indeed, madame never saw this estate again, a place which was all the more dear to her in that she held it from her husband. After the July Revolution, the Rosny estate was sold and parcelled out. Certain individuals are crazy to possess what has belonged to the great, which is their way of consoling themselves for being doomed to remain nobodies. The castle alone, I am told, remains standing. If I could be carried there on a litter, I would refuse to go; I might meet some fat tradeswoman there, grown rich, in a trailing dress, and that would spoil my remembrance of the good duchess — as they used to call her in the country where she did so much good — in her little silk apron.

From 1818 to 1829 — when the Opéra-Comique removed from the Salle Feydeau, which was falling in ruins, to the Place Ventadour — I never missed going, at least twice a week, to spend an hour or two in the greenroom of this theatre, a greenroom which resembled a drawing-room, and a drawing-room such as there have existed very

few in Paris, where all the most distinguished artists used to meet.

I am not much of a conversationalist, as I have said, and consequently am more inclined to listen to those to whom it seems to me worth while to listen, than to get them to listen to me, and in this way I have been able to study the leading artists of every kind whom I used to meet in the foyer of the Opéra-Comique.

Do you wish me to call them up before your eyes? Another sort of necrological review! But can the living complain if one talks to them of the dead, when these dead are worthy of being talked about?

I make no selection, I take each figure as it comes back to my mind, without troubling myself about his greater or lesser title to celebrity.

First of all, here's Garat. It was in 1818, when my first piece was being rehearsed at the Théâtre Feydeau, that I saw Garat for the first time in the greenroom. Always elegant, always foppishly dressed, although he was then past fifty, always lisping, and always laughing, with a laugh which was, I assure you, anything but contagious. Garat's laugh used to sound like the creaking of a door, the hinges of which needed oiling; one could hardly believe as one listened to this irritating noise that this was the same voice which so delighted its hearers when he sang. Madame Boulanger, who was acting in "une Nuit au château,"

was one of Garat's pupils. He was present at two rehearsals of the piece, and, on the evening before the first performance, Madame Boulanger having sung a verse in a way which displeased him, he began to sing it himself in the midst of the crowd of visitors and actors. Oh! on that day, I forgave him his execrable laugh. Madame Boulanger was still young, in 1818, and had a pretty voice, but she could not sing my song like Garat. It began,—

Oui, les femmes de ce pays
Sont fideles a leurs maris,
Tout comme celles de Paris.[1]

Garat had the vitality, the "go" of the Gascon that he was. He used to tell wonderful anecdotes from his recollections of the court of Marie-Antoinette, of the Directoire and the Empire. Elleviou, although he had long since left the stage, was never happier than when amongst his old comrades, and used to converse very pleasantly also, but when Hoffman, the critic of "Les Debats" and author of "Le Roman d'une heure" and the "Rendezvous bourgeois," was in the greenroom of the Théâtre Feydeau, "nobody else got any show," as Garat used to say, burying his chin ill-temperedly in his cravat. But, apart from Garat, nobody minded this at all. Hoffman was witty to the tips of his fingers — I might almost say to

[1] Yes, the women of this country
Are faithful to their husbands—
Just like those of Paris.

the tips of his claws, for he was bitter. But his sarcasm was so amusing, so bright, so original, that the person clawed by him was always the first to laugh at the scratch; and note that he used to stammer—an infirmity which usually drives listeners away. Picard, who was no friend of his because he had often handled his plays roughly, used to say of Hoffman, "He stammers on purpose, so as to get time to think over his impertinences." As for me, I was fortunate enough to please Hoffman, and he gave me the proof of this on several occasions. Perhaps it was because I cared as little for talking as he cared little for holding his tongue.

Among the writers with whom I made friendly acquaintance at the Opéra-Comique I may mention Emmanuel Dupaty, the author of "Picaros et Diego," and of a poem called "Les Delateurs," which created an immense stir under the Restoration; Alexandre Duval, another man who was certainly not a Republican; old Bouilly, who had been nicknamed "the tearful story-teller"; Scribe; Banard; Saint-Georges, who, like myself, was a very young man in those days. Ought I to say "in those very young days," when by grace of Providence (no doubt in return for his many acts of charity) this happy M. de Saint-Georges is still to be seen today, after a lapse of forty years—as straight in the back, as fresh in complexion, and as black, as to his hair, as he was on the first day

on which we met. Auber said to me last winter, speaking of M. de Saint-Georges: "He's the Laferrière of dramatic authors." And the sly old octogenarian added at once, with a laugh: "Like Laferrière in his obstinacy in remaining young. Don't misunderstand me."

Amongst musicians I may name Cherubini, Berton, Gaveaux; Boïeldieu, the most modest and benevolent of men of genius; Auber; Hérold, who rivalled Hoffman in caustic verve; Kreutzer, the able bandmaster at the Opera; Panseron, styled "Nevertheless"; Caraffa; Frederic Kreube and Pradher; Blangini, who had been the master of Pauline Borghese's orchestra, and, according to "la chronique scandaleuse," which he was careful not to contradict, to some extent also the master of her heart; Batton, who combined the glory of art with the profits of trade — he was a manufacturer of artificial flowers. And why did he not stick to flowers all his life? We should then have avoided writing, in collaboration, a comic opera in three acts, the very name of which I try to forget, whose terrible fall, no doubt, contributed in no small measure to shake the old foundation-stones of the theatre in the Rue Feydeau.

Amongst painters, Carle and Horace Vernet, Isabey, Picot, Alaux, Ciceri.

Amongst actors and actresses of the Opéra-Comique, Martin, Moreau, the handsome Lemonnier, Gavaudan, Ponchard, Fereol, Baptiste,

Vizentini, Lafeuillade, Huet, Cholet, fat mamma Desbrosses, also Mesdames Pradher, Boulanger, Rigaut, Gavaudan, Ponchard, Lemonnier and Mesdemoiselles Jenny Colon and Jawureck.

The great actors employed at other theatres used also occasionally to be present at what might be called the soirees of the greenroom of the Opéra-Comique. I have met there Talma and Mademoiselle Mars; Lays, one of the stars, at that time almost eclipsed, of the opera; Ligier, Armand, Madame Pasta, from the Italian theatre; Leotine Fay, from the Gymnase; Minette, from the Vaudeville. I also made the acquaintance there of a man who, by reason of his profession, which naturally enough is not held in very high esteem by theatrical people — he was censor — should have been very ill at his ease in such a gathering, but who, on the contrary, was always received there with open arms, for his great wit and merriment.

Perpignan was the name of this censor, who belonged to a school of censors now of the past. His fund of good-humor was inexhaustible. Funny stories and jocular anecdotes poured like water from his mouth. Every evening he knew all that had happened during the day in the world of artists, and used to hasten to the Théâtre Feydeau to tell us all about it, drawing a few select friends aside into one corner of the greenroom for the purpose — as his stories were often fast.

"I can't understand it, old fellow," Hérold, who did not object to fast stories, used to say to him. "You must have detectives in your service, so as always to be the first to know all the scandals."

"You are quite right," said Perpignan, "I have a pocket-police, but everybody else can have just such a police of his own, and the only thing is to know how to make use of it."

"And of what is it composed?"

"Of all the idiots whom I have the honor of knowing. When I meet them I stroke them down and question them. Idiots are almost always conceited and talkative. When they want to make a man laugh, especially when that man has the reputation of being fond of laughing, they don't mind telling their adventures, even when the story is altogether against them. And so you see, my dear Hérold, by simply walking up and down the boulevards, from the corner of the Rue Louis-le-Grand to the corner of the Rue Montmartre, from three o'clock to five, I have no difficulty in getting all the queer or funny items of news of the day. I am always certain to meet, during my two hours' walk, at least half a dozen simpletons who are ready to prove their stupidity to me by telling me all their private affairs, and who are amply repaid if, on quitting them, I say, 'Thanks, that's a splendid story of yours.' 'Is it not? But keep it to yourself, because, as you may imagine, I don't want people to know that—'

'Of course not, what do you take me for? Anything confided to me is sacred.'"

A good story which I heard from Perpignan, and which I have used, with certain modifications in one of my novels, is the following. Its heroes were a comic actor of the Variétés theatre, one of the most popular actors under Charles X and during the first years of Louis-Philippe's reign, and a portrait painter who was also equally the fashion at that time.

We will call the actor Piberlo and the painter Mistenflute. As cuckolds generally leave descendants, we must not risk giving offence to their families, even after forty years, by mentioning their real names.

Well, Piberlo, the actor, had a wife, a pretty wife, whom he used to neglect sadly; first, because he had been married to her for ten years, and secondly, because this comedian was a thorough rake, and like all rakes whose senses have been blunted by excesses he found no charm in the healthy joys of conjugal felicity.

Madame Piberlo, who loved her husband, put up with this conduct for a long time, protesting only with tears and gentle reproaches against a neglect which was so insulting to her personal attractions. But women tire of weeping, especially when it is of no use. One day Madame Piberlo wiped her eyes and said, "Oh, it's so, is it? He goes his way; very well, then I shall go mine.

If an agreeable occasion offers, may my husband lose his nose, to which he owes all his triumphs, if I don't seize upon it."

The occasion presented itself. One of Madame Piberlo's lady friends had had her portrait painted by Mistenflute, the painter. The portrait was very good, it was very well painted and extremely moderate in price, when the artist's standing was remembered. This was Piberlo's own opinion.

"Well, then," said his wife, "you won't object to my having my portrait painted by M. Mistenflute."

"I, not at all, if it pleases you."

"It will please me very much."

"All right, my dear, get your portrait painted by M. Mistenflute."

But it was less the painting than the painter that Madame Piberlo was thinking about when she made this request to her husband. Madame Piberlo had met M. Mistenflute at her friend's house; he was a fine man of about thirty-five years of age, and had pleased her at first sight. For his part, M. Mistenflute had exhibited extreme gallantry towards Madame Piberlo, of whose conjugal misfortune he was aware.

Under such circumstances, a rapid result was inevitable. At the first sitting, Mistenflute did little more than sketch out the lines of his new model's face, but, on the other hand, he made a full confession of his passion; and at the second

sitting, encouraged by an eloquent blush, the painter, making way for the lover, had become pressing. This time, also, he had been resisted, but if the axiom, the third time brings success, be true, Madame Piberlo must have punished her husband for his infidelities, all the more so because, to render this third sitting a pleasanter one, it had been agreed that it should take place in a private room in a restaurant, accompanied by oysters, truffles and champagne. And Mistenflute had special reasons for wishing this meeting to take place outside, for, although he was a bachelor and as such free to do as he liked, apparently free that is, but not so in fact, for the reason that our painter, who was not very nice in his choice of distractions, had had the weakness to put himself under the thumb of a servant-mistress, Catherine, a little Burgundian, young and compliant, but as jealous as she could possibly be. Whenever a lady came to sit to her master, Catherine used to watch at the keyhole to see what was going on between him and the lady, and if she saw or heard anything suspicious, she used to make frightful scenes, such, for instance, as the following, which took place after Madame Piberlo's second sitting.

"Well, indeed! So that lady's to your taste, monsieur. You can't deny it?"

"What's that? What did you say, Catherine? What lady are you talking about?"

"Hang it! the lady who has just gone out — not the queen of spades!"

"You're mad."

"Ah, I'm mad! I suppose you'll deny that you kissed her."

"I kiss Madame Piberlo? — I? — You mean to say you saw me?"

"Don't try to be so clever. I didn't see it because you had put a canvas before the keyhole — and that's a proof that you were intending some dirty trick. But a canvas doesn't prevent one's hearing if it does prevent one's seeing, and I heard the sound of kisses very clearly. I heard them so clearly that I had to hold myself back with all my might, or I should have broken the door in and let your fine lady have it with my fists."

"That would have been a pretty to do."

"Well, and why does she let herself be cajoled by you? A married woman — it's shameful! It would serve her right if her husband were to give her a good thrashing. And then, these actors — for I know him well, your Madame Piberlo's husband — he's an actor — an actor at the Variétés. I've seen him act, and stupid enough he looks on the stage."

"Well, and what about it?"

"Well, perhaps fellows in that trade would just as soon wear the horns as not."

"You're mad. I tell you once again, Catherine, Madame Piberlo is worthy of all respect."

"Yes? Well, if she is so worthy of respect as all that, you mark me, monsieur, you write and tell her that you are forced to give up painting her portrait, that you are starting on a journey — that you're ill — anything you like, provided that you don't see her again."

"Oh, bother, you tire me. If I were to listen to you, I should soon have to give up painting women altogether."

"Paint ugly women, and then I'll say nothing."

"And I tell you to go hang with your jealousy."

"Is that your last word? You refuse to write to Madame Piberlo to tell her to get her portrait painted elsewhere?"

"Most certainly, I refuse."

"All right, so much the worse for you. I have given you warning, you shall pay for this, and she also."

"All right, all right. In the meantime, perhaps you'll be good enough to get my steak ready, that will be much better than talking nonsense."

Thanks to his ingenious precaution of placing a canvas before the keyhole of his studio during his two amorous sittings, Mistenflute felt himself master of the situation. So, without troubling himself about Catherine's threats, or the prolonged fit of sulking in which she indulged, he punctually kept his appointment next day, and conducted Madame Piberlo, in a hermetically closed cab, to the Meridien, a restaurant on the Boulevard du

Temple, renowned for the excellence of its filleted soles au gratin and the luxurious furniture of its private rooms.

However, just as our lovers were sitting down to table Piberlo was at his theatre, rehearsing a vaudeville in which he had an important part. Just at the finish of one of the principal scenes, which had gone off with a rush to the enthusiastic applause of the author, he was talking with a comrade behind one of the side scenes, when the doorkeeper of the theatre came up to him in a mysterious manner and said,—

"M. Piberlo, a word with you, if you please."

"What is it?"

His comrade had discreetly withdrawn. The doorkeeper continued,—

"M. Piberlo, there's a woman downstairs in my room who says that she absolutely must speak to you at once."

"At once? I am rehearsing, I can't leave the rehearsal. What sort of a woman is she?"

"She looks like a servant."

"A servant?"

"Yes, and so I began to tell her that when you were rehearsing it was quite useless to ask to see you. But she cried out in a rage: 'What! when I want to do him a service, when a terrible misfortune is hanging over him, which, thanks to me, he can escape, do you mean to say that M. Piberlo will refuse to see me?'"

"A service? A great misfortune? Oh! that's quite a different matter. The rehearsal can wait."

So saying, Piberlo darted down the actor's staircase; he was in the doorkeeper's lodge before the latter. The woman who wanted to see him was, as you have guessed, Catherine — Catherine, Mistenflute's servant and mistress. Her cheeks were blazing, her eyes were flashing fire, her breath came and went in gasps, like a person violently agitated.

She recognized Piberlo.

"So here you are at last, sir. It's not a pity. Come quick. I have a cab waiting. We may yet be in time."

"In time? Where? For what?"

"I'll tell you all about it in the cab. Come."

"Excuse me, pretty one, I must really ask, before going off with you —"

"Oh! You must know at once. All right."

Seizing Piberlo by the arm, Catherine dragged him out of the lodge into the yard, and there, motioning him to stoop down, for he was as tall as she was short, she cried in his ear,—

"You are married, sir, are you not?"

"Yes."

"And you love your wife?"

"Why, what a question! Of course I love my wife! But —"

"Well, then, you make a very great mistake. She doesn't care a bit for you, since she makes a fool of you."

"A fool of me! What do you mean? What are you talking about, girl?"

"I say that your wife is unfaithful to you. At least, if she hasn't been so as yet she soon will be. It's not the inclination that she lacks, and as to my master, M. Mistenflute, he asks nothing better than to assist her inclination."

"M. Mistenflute, the painter?"

"Yes, of course, M. Mistenflute, the painter; who, as we are talking here, is in a private room with Madame Piberlo, in a restaurant."

"Oh!"

"Ah! That vexes you, doesn't it?"

"Madame Piberlo unfaithful! And you know where she is now, the wretch, with her lover?"

"Of course I know, since I have come here to take you to them."

"Take me there, take me there at once. Perfidious Eléonore — I will kill her, yes, I will kill her. I will wash my dishonor in her blood."

Striding along at Catherine's side, Piberlo soon reached the cab, which was waiting on the boulevard, opposite the Passage des Panoramas.

The little servant-girl jumped into the cab and said to the coachman: "Drive where I first took you, in front of the Théâtre de la Gaîté."

Piberlo, in his turn, dashed into the cab, which immediately rolled off.

True it must be that rakes are constitutionally different from virtuous men, that is to say, that

with them vicious instincts dominate all other motives. Entirely taken up with her plans of vengeance, and, besides, being ten leagues from the thought that under the circumstances her companion could have eyes for such trifles, Catherine, in springing into the cab, had unintentionally displayed, a trifle higher than the garter perhaps, a pair of limbs which many fashionable ladies in Paris would have envied the country girl, beautifully shaped legs, round and muscular at the same time, a pair of limbs full of seductive promises, a pair of limbs fit to draw a man to the four corners of Paris; a pair of limbs such as Madame Piberlo assuredly did not possess. At least, the sudden sight of them awoke this idea in our actor's brain, and this idea turned his thoughts into a very different direction.

He was sitting opposite to Catherine, looking closely at her. For, apart from her beautiful limbs, she wasn't bad, the little peasant-girl, not at all bad.

He took her hand.

"And so," he began, "you are in M. Mistenflute's service, my child?"

"Yes."

"You do everything for him?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if it distresses you so much that he should make love to women, it is because you have your reasons for wishing to keep for yourself

what he gives to other ladies — I mean that you have certain rights over him — very tender rights."

"I don't deny it, sir. I do like my master very much."

"Oh, indeed. Well, he's not to be pitied, the fellow, to be liked by such a nice girl as you."

"Oh, pooh. Go and tell him that. He cares a lot for my liking him."

"Really! Does he make a habit of being untrue to you?"

"He does nothing else. Why, it's barely a week since he made your wife's acquaintance and — "

"And he's a monster, this M. Mistenflute, nothing else, little one. What's your name, dear child?"

"Catherine, sir."

"My little Catherine, your master is a wretch."

"Oh, that he is."

"Who does not deserve to possess such a jewel as you."

"Oh, I am no jewel, and yet if my master wanted it he could be so happy with me. To begin with, I am always thinking how to please him."

"Poor little Catherine."

"And — why, what are you doing now, monsieur? What are you kissing me for?"

"Because you are crying, Catherine. It touches me. I am drying your eyes."

"Thanks, I can dry them myself."

"No, you'll never dry them as well as I can dry them. Do you know, Catherine, I have a proposition to make to you!"

"What is it?"

"Your master is a scoundrel — my wife is — is a wretch."

"Yes, indeed. It's my opinion also that your wife isn't worth much."

"Well, instead of torturing ourselves about people who betray us, why not seek to console each other mutually."

"What? Well, there's an idea!"

"A very sensible idea, my little Catherine, my love of a Catherine. You leave M. Mistenflute's service, you leave him today, without a word of warning. You don't set foot in his house again. To begin our mutual consolation we'll dine tête-à-tête in a restaurant, and tomorrow I'll take a room for you in a fine part of the town — a fine room which I'll furnish for you. Oh! I earn as much money as M. Mistenflute, don't you be afraid. And with me you won't be a servant; you'll have nothing to do all day long but to be fond of me. Settled, eh, my angel? It's settled, is it not? To the devil with your master! To the devil with my wife! Let us have our revenge. Let us take a terrible revenge."

Stupefied with astonishment, Catherine had allowed Piberlo to speak without interrupting him, and taking her silence for consent to his proposal

the comedian wished to obtain a more conclusive one. So, whilst with one hand he clasped the servant-girl's waist, with the other he began to draw down the blinds of the carriage. The imminence of her danger recalled Catherine to her senses. With a violent effort she freed herself, and then, redder than ever, doubly red with anger and with disgust, she cried out, "Is it possible? Oh! I might tell a hundred people this story and they would all swear that it was a farce. What, you know that at this very moment your wife is tippling at a restaurant with her lover, and that's all the effect it produces on you? You want—"

"I want you to be mine, my little Catherine. I don't care for my wife any more. I don't care a fig for my wife. I love you alone."

"And I abominate you. Ah, I was quite right in thinking that people in your occupation have no heart."

"Yes, I have a heart, my little bluebird. And here, I offer it to you in this kiss."

"Come. Will you let go of me, I say."

"No, I won't let go of you. Catherine, a kiss, one only kiss, a pledge of my happiness."

"Yes, well, here you are, here's a pledge of your happiness. And now go and look for your wife by yourself. Good-night."

So saying, Catherine freed herself once more from Piberlo, striking him a vigorous blow with her fist full in his face. Then, opening the door,

she jumped out of the cab, and so disappeared amidst the crowd on the boulevard.

"Here we are before the Théâtre de la Gaîté, governor," said the cab-driver, rousing Piberlo from the painful torpor into which the little servant's energetic and victorious defence had plunged him. It was true, he was at the Gaîté. But what then? What use was it for him to have come there when he did not know at which restaurant it was that his wife was lunching with M. Mistenflute? No use at all!

"Well," continued the cab-driver, seeing that his fare did not budge, "are you going to get out, governor? So, the lady who was with you has gone?"

"Yes," said Piberlo, with an attempt at a smile. "She got out on the way to have a tooth pulled out, and, on reflection, I shan't get out here. Take me back to the Variétés, old boy."

So said, so done. A cuckold, beaten and discontented, the comedian returned to his rehearsal, having made up his mind, since he had not been able to take his wife "flagrante delicto," at least to admonish her severely.

But even this consolation was denied him, for when he opened the attack with this question, which he thought would confound her, "Where and with whom did you lunch today, madame?"

"Rue de l'Échiquier, monsieur," said Madame Piberlo, quite calmly, "with my friend, Madame Dubois."

And there were no proofs with which to confound the traitress, and besides, he was afraid that if he told his wife what he knew, which she could deny by accusing Catherine of telling lies, she might make fun of him and throw in his face the misadventure which had befallen him, the authenticity of which it was impossible for him to deny.

"Very well," said the prudent husband.

And that was all. He carried his investigations no further. He even allowed his wife to continue her sittings at Mistenflute's studio, saying to himself, no doubt, that if after all she were not guilty — for a lady may lunch with a gentleman without any harm — there was no reason to prevent her having her portrait; and that if she were guilty he must just put up with it, for nothing that he could do would undo what was done.

But the most curious thing about it was that this husband, who to escape being laughed at by his wife had philosophically accepted a grievance which probably was very well founded, should have so little feeling about the matter as to relate the whole story to a man whom he knew to be a kind of walking newspaper. His adventure seemed so exceedingly laughable to him that he felt Perpignan must share in his fun.

Perpignan was quite right, idiots would supply the rope for their own hanging, provided they were told whilst being hanged, "Oh, what a fine rope. It's only you who have so fine a rope."

A last word about Perpignan which will bring a smile to the lips of those who knew him, because it will remind them of this amusing fellow's singular monomania. This craze of his consisted in drawing horses everywhere and on everything. A certain manager of the Palais-Royal theatre, whom I will not name as I do not wish to bring a blush to his cheek, although it is long since he resigned his post, had a passion that was far less innocent. From morning to night, in his office, he did nothing but draw with his pen sketches — how shall I say it? Rabelais would have said it outright, but then I am not Rabelais! Sketches — sketches, in short, of certain attractions the most absolute lack of which in Dejazet was one of the chief reasons of her ease in effecting disguises. You understand, do you not? And this hobby of the theatrical manager in question caused not a few ladies — who committed the imprudence of approaching him too suddenly — to bite their thumbs, on finding him plunged in his all too realistic drawings. Perpignan's imagination was not quite so decolleté. Horses were enough for him; horses seen from the front, horses in profile, in three-quarters face, horses racing or resting, horses galloping or sleeping. And, really, to tell the truth, he did not draw them at all badly, as Horace Vernet himself admitted. But he certainly used to draw too many of them. If you asked Perpignan to dinner, he would slip out be-

fore it was announced into the dining-room, and, profiting by the five minutes you were not watching him, would get out his stick of Indian ink and draw a horse on each of the dinner-plates, under the soup-plates. He very nearly got himself into serious trouble in Algiers, where he was sent some years after the conquest, with the officers who lived in the same hotel as himself, for persisting in ornamenting their plates, day after day, in spite of their wishes on the subject. These gentlemen were hungry, and just as they were going to help themselves to slices of roast beef or mutton each would find a picture on his plate and be forced to call for a clean one. At first the officers laughed, but afterwards they got angry. Perpignan was obliged, in fear of a sword-thrust, to renounce the exercise of his equestrian hobby on the hotel dinner service, and consoled himself by drawing his favorite subject all over the rooms of the cabash, even in the most private places.

"I can't help it," he used to say to me; "it's not my fault, but when I haven't drawn a dozen horses in the day I feel quite ill."

To prevent his being ill, whenever he came to dine at my house, especially when expecting other guests, I used to bring him a dozen plates. He gave reins to his folly, and after that was quite sensible again.

A witty man, who was a man of talent besides, whose acquaintance I made about 1826, in the

greenroom of the Opéra-Comique, was Adolphe Adam. Was! always was. Yet another who is no more. Yet another who died in the prime of his life, like Hérold, with whom, as I think, he had many points of resemblance both in disposition and musical talents, and who, I may add, loved him like a brother. Younger than I by about ten years, Adam showed me from the very first that he liked me. My style as a novelist pleased him; in which respect he differed from Hérold, who reproached me for being too fast. And this was really the reason why I only wrote "Le Muletier" with Hérold; he did not forget that my piece had provoked some disapproval on the first night, and this, he said — not without justice, as I admit — very nearly spoiled the success of his music. And it is certain that M. de Planard, whom he took after me as collaborator, did not give him the same reasons for complaint. "Marie" bears no resemblance whatever to "Le Muletier."

Adam, who in 1826 was still only writing music for vaudevilles, was not so rigorous towards me. "Write me a poem, Paul de Kock," he often said to me. I don't remember what prevented me — though I regret it today — from acceding to his request, but I remember very well that after a fête which we visited together, a fête given by a popular poetical and lyrical society known as Les Bergers de Syracuse, I told him a plot I had thought

out for a comic opera in two acts, which pleased him very much. The society of the Shepherds of Syracuse, which was flourishing in 1826, was composed of people of every kind of trade, tailors, hair-dressers, boot-makers, hatters, hosiers, grocers, all mad admirers of Apollo and of Erato. On joining this society each member adopted some name in keeping with its appellation; Lycidas, Corydon, Palemon, Tyrcis, and so on. Women were not admitted to the purely lyrical and poetical meetings, for fear they should disturb the shepherds reciting their idyls and singing their songs. But on the solemn day on which the feast of "The Great Shepherd," their supreme head, was celebrated, the shepherds were reinforced by the shepherdesses. And they were quite right to do so, for there was dancing at this fête, and a ball at which men only were present, shepherds though they might be, would certainly have been lacking in picturesqueness.

My tailor, who was a shepherd of Syracuse, had sent me in my capacity of dramatic author an invitation for the feast of "The Great Shepherd." I asked him for another, for Adam. Adam was a musician, so there could be no difficulty about it, and Adam was duly invited. The fête took place at Belleville, at the Ile d'Amour. It was on an evening in the month of July. We arrived just as the shepherds, before dancing with the shepherdesses, were singing a chorus in honor

of Sylvander, the Great Shepherd, who was raised aloft in their midst on a rustic platform in the garden. At his side was a young girl, crowned with myrtle and roses, who, we were told, represented the nymph Arethusa, patroness of the corporation. Whilst one listens one can look, and whilst looking one may even dispense with listening. The chorus was, no doubt, very fine, but we much preferred to study the shepherdesses. I won't assert that they were all pretty, and certainly not that they were Sicilian in appearance and language. These shepherdesses of Syracuse were obviously artificial flower-makers and linen-drapers' assistants from the Rue de Saint-Martin. But they all wore so coquettishly their uniform toilette, a white frock and a large straw hat trimmed with blue or pink ribbons, and they looked so happy, so ready to be jolly, that Adam and I felt quite willing to submit to the sway of the crooks of any two of them whom we might choose and who would deign to accept us for a few hours as their shepherds.

So soon as the chorus was over, the shepherds, with their little ebony flutes, fitted with ivory, attached to the button-holes of their coats, marched past the Great Shepherd and the nymph Arethusa, and then the ball was opened. A ball with songs between each dance. Ah, not contented with dancing alone, the Shepherds of Syracuse had to sing also. And these regular interruptions between the

quadrilles, which at first seemed to be tedious, were later on voted an excellent invention both by Adam and myself. Whilst the shepherds were singing the shepherdesses walked under the trees in the gardens, and we walked there also and could talk with less restraint than in the ballroom to the two who had won our hearts, Mesdemoiselles Idalie and Aminta, otherwise Josephine and Élise, an artificial flower-maker and a polisher. And so, towards ten o'clock, having been able to persuade these ladies that there would be enough shepherdesses without them left to the shepherds in the Ile d'Amour, we took them off to supper at the Vendanges de Bourgogne.

My tailor bitterly reproached me afterwards for this abduction of shepherdesses, which had greatly displeased his brother shepherds.

"It's not right," he said, "what you have done there. No, that's not good behavior. And do you know what the consequence will be? Idalia and Aminta will no longer be received at the 'hamlet.' The Great Shepherd has solemnly declared it; their names have been erased from the list of shepherdesses."

"Bah," I said, "what harm have they done? They were hungry and we offered them a wing of a chicken. That won't prevent them from returning to their sheep, when you call them back."

Lycidas, otherwise, Bertrand, my tailor, shook his head.

"We shall never recall them," said he, decisively. "We have our standard of morality at the hamlet, sir, and we don't want to have anything to do with shepherdesses who are immodest enough to go off with our guests."

In a word, this society of Shepherds of Syracuse, ridiculous as it was in the foolish pomposity of its ceremony and the pretensions of its members to rank as poets and lyrists, had in itself nothing worthy of blame. These workpeople who met together under names borrowed from ancient pastorals, to sing and dance, were quite as worthy as those who assemble today to discuss their civil rights before jugs of blue wine. And then the popular fêtes of those days had the advantage over those of today that one could go to them without fearing asphyxiation. The people probably drank as much in those days as they drink now, but they did not smoke. Two or three years ago I wanted to see a popular ball in Paris, out of curiosity, and I saw nothing — clouds of smoke filled the room — but I smelt a good deal, and I made haste to escape. Poor people of Paris, is, then, one of your most precious senses, the sense of smell, so weakened that you can find pleasure in unceasingly saturating yourself with the filthy stench of that accursed plant, tobacco? The people will answer me by saying that everybody in Paris, high and low, smokes nowadays, rich and poor, artists and shopkeepers, workmen

and noblemen. Well, to this I reply that it's so much the worse if everybody smokes nowadays in Paris — and, I presume, in the provinces also — because, as I think, the tobacco habit is an odious custom which has disorganized everything amongst us, gallantry, good manners, wit, amiability, politeness. What I am about to say may seem paradoxical, but I am convinced that if for the last thirty years the French have always been dissatisfied with everything, always restless, always turbulent, it's because they always have either a pipe or a cigar in their mouths. It is tobacco which makes them mad or wicked. Let them give up smoking and they will become again what they were before, good and intelligent.

This will instruct you, reader, how little I use tobacco. I have already mentioned one of my aversions, travelling; tobacco is my second aversion, and dogs my third. This last aversion dates from my childhood. Whilst I was quite a child I used to see my mother turn pale when the smallest toy-terrier came near her, barking; and, having learned thus, as a child, to beware of the canine race, I continued as I grew older to keep it at as great a distance as possible from me. Upon reflection, however, I will say this, that if I were forced to choose between a journey of fifty leagues, the society of a smoker for a whole day, and the company of a dog for a month, I would give the preference to the dog, having learned

from experience that if all dogs bark they don't all bite, whilst, as far as I am concerned, all journeys are tiresome, and all smokers unbearable.

What I like amongst animals —

But I'll tell you that later on. At present, I must close this chapter.

The fête of the Shepherds of Syracuse at the Ile d'Amour had given me the idea for a comic opera which pleased Adam immensely, and we frequently met to talk it over. But various circumstances separated us. Adam went off on a journey, if I remember rightly, some very pressing work claimed my time; in a word, "Les Bergers de Syracuse" remained an embryo. This did not prevent me, later, from applauding with all my force the first performance of Adam's first work, "Pierre et Catherine," which was played at the Salle Feydeau, for its closing in 1829.

For its definite closing. The hall was condemned, and it was closed for the last time in April, 1829. It was not without regret that I saw its walls falling under the picks of the masons. No doubt the theatre was an old one, it was mean and clumsy in construction; its entrance, narrow and dark, was as dangerous for people on foot as it was inconvenient for carriages, but it was full of pleasant recollections for me. I had scored some triumphs there; amongst others, besides those which I have mentioned, that of a piece in three acts, "Les Enfants de Maître Pierre," with

music by Kreube, in which Ponchard, La Feuillade, and Mesdames Pradher and Rigaut acted. It seemed to me, as I watched its destruction, that it was less a public building which was being destroyed for the public safety than a friend of mine who was being sacrificed.

And is it not as natural to attach one's self to things as to people, and if one weeps for a dead friend may one not also weep for the house where one used to meet this friend?

Hérold shared my opinion in this regard. One evening in the autumn of 1829 we were passing in front of the Salle Feydeau, of which nothing was left but a heap of rubbish.

"It was there," he said, "that my first two operas were played, my 'Rosières' and my 'Clochette.'"

"It was there," said I, "that they played our 'Muletier.'"

"Ah, well," said Hérold, "I regret this theatre. One knows what one loses, one does not know what one is going to get."

Dear Hérold. He was fated not long to survive the Salle Feydeau. Less than four years later, in the month of January, 1833, he succumbed, in the flower of his youth, at the height of his fame, to a disease of the chest. I was present at the first performance of his "Le Pré aux Clercs," his swan's song, and when I got home after this triumphal evening I awoke my wife at

CHAPTER VIII

In some previous chapter of these memoirs I have stated, I think, that I have never received anything from any government, nor from any other public authority whatsoever. But I wish to state at this point that in declaring thus I made a mistake, which I will now proceed to rectify. For in 1829, I received from M. de Chabrol, at that time Prefect of the Seine, an invitation to dine at the Hôtel de Ville,—an invitation which I was servile enough to accept, with a certain amount of pleasure even.

The Count de Chabrol, who was a man of great merit, as is fully proved by the fact that he had been left under the Restoration in a post which he occupied under the Empire — had a reputation for loving the arts and for protecting them. That this Count de Chabrol, then, should ask me to his table — me, the popular novelist — was a tacit acknowledgment that my works had some value; that they were meritorious productions in his eyes.

I am not, I hope, unduly conceited, but it is pleasing to meet, now and again, at a time especially when one is often attacked, some one who

proves by his acts how little he cares for these attacks. I repeat it, it was with great pleasure that I accepted the prefect's invitation.

I was placed at this dinner, where were about forty guests, painters, authors, and musicians for the most part, between Auber and Casimir Delavigne. I had long been on friendly terms with Auber, but Casimir Delavigne I only knew by sight. I paid him some compliments on his "Marino Faleiro," which had just been produced at the Porte Saint-Martin, and this soon broke the ice. Casimir Delavigne, whose talent is being denied today, as though today we possessed many poets of his standing, was very amiable and very simple as a man. Disliking official gatherings, and far preferring his family circle to society, he had only come to this banquet at M. Chabrol's pressing request. And, indeed, I could understand that a big dinner possessed few attractions for him, for, in obedience to the restriction which his delicate health imposed upon him, he ate nothing but vegetables and drank nothing but water.

"Poor Delavigne," said Auber, who like myself possessed an excellent digestion, and is still so blessed I should say, for whenever we meet nowadays it is always in a provision shop, Potel et Chabot's, or Chevat's — "Poor Delavigne, it must be rather trying to you to see all these succulent dishes, all these generous wines passing before you, without being able to touch them."

"Oh, not at all," said the author of "l'École des vieillards," laughing, "I look at you, my dear Auber, and you, M. Paul de Kock, and see you enjoying these dishes and these wines like true connoisseurs, and, as there is pleasure in admiration, I'm not at all bored."

During the evening, the Comte de Chabrol addressed some very flattering words to me in private, but which I deem it superfluous to repeat here. What I will repeat is something else that was then said to me by the prefect of Charles X which has stuck in my memory as the starting-point of a sort of "scie" (everyone knows what a "scie" is in the slang of the studio) of which I have been the butt for the last forty years, and which, especially during the last few years — quite contrary to the intention of those who have made me its object and who imagine, on the contrary, that they are obliging me — has become insufferably odious to me. This "scie," whenever I hear it, produces upon me the effect which Ravel, if you remember, manifested so drolly in "une Fievre brulante," whenever he heard the sound of a piano. I feel that I could howl. If I don't howl like Ravel, it's because I dislike dogs and don't want to have, even by chance, anything in common with them.

I will explain. I have borne my martyrdom quite long enough, as it is, without crying, "Hold, enough!" and where could I find a better oppor-

tunity for unbosoming myself than in my memoirs.

Well, then, after dinner the prefect had walked up and down with me in one of the drawing-rooms for twenty minutes, chatting. Just as he was going to leave me to attend to his other guests, he said to me, touching the buttonhole of my coat with his finger,—

"There's nothing there yet. We must get something put there one of these days."

This "something," everybody can guess what it was, and I confess, with all humility, that the thought that this "something" might be bestowed on me was in no wise shocking to my modesty. One usually draws comparisons under such circumstances. I saw men of letters being decorated every day to whom I considered myself equal, and I did not consider myself, accordingly, unworthy of a favor which had been granted to them.

But if M. de Chabrol was sincere, and I am convinced that he was so, if he really thought of rewarding in my person a light, a very light author, such as I was—one who never tried to fix the attention of his readers by skilful dramatic conceptions nor by effects of style, but who, although he had adopted as his motto these two words, "Laughter first," had never tried to justify this motto by sacrificing the things to which respect is due, morality and religion — events occurred which prevented him from carrying out his kind

intentions. The revolution of 1830 broke out; M. de Chabrol disappeared into retirement, and the bit of ribbon which in some sort he had offered me never came to adorn my buttonhole.

During the reign of Louis-Philippe, I won't say one hundred, but two hundred, three hundred people, each in turn, repeated M. de Chabrol's words to me, in varying formulas: "There's nothing there yet, we must get something put there." I may name M. de Salvandy, before he became a minister, M. de Salvandy, whose acquaintance I made in 1824, when he was trying his hand as a novelist, and who at that time deigned to treat me as "colleague"; Alexander Dumas, who never once met me without saying, "Tell me the secret for writing a book like 'Monsieur Dupont,' Paul de Kock!" Scribe; Bayard; Melesville; Mery; Gérard de Nerval — whom I had never seen, but who, meeting me one day at the theatre, said as he nearly squeezed my hand off, "What, you're not decorated, M. Paul de Kock. Why, it's infamous. What can these snobs of ministers be thinking about?" — Abel de Pujol, the painter; Gomis, the musician; David d'Angers; Dantan.

I used to welcome gratefully all these offers of service or expressions of regret, which were all the more gracious because I had never solicited them; but when a man has been making himself hoarse for over fifteen years in returning thanks without

ever receiving anything, it may be conceived that at times he feels somewhat out of humor.

In 1839 a writer of vaudevilles, who had several times collaborated with me in dramatic work, and in conjunction with whom I had, notably, produced the play "Un de plus" for the Vaudeville, Dupeuty by name, found a means of exhausting my patience in regard to this subject. Dupeuty had often said to me: "It's a real shame that you are not decorated, Paul de Kock." One day he said to me in my study,—

"My dear friend, now speak the truth. You would not mind having the cross, would you?"

"Certainly not," said I. "If I could get it without having to ask for it."

"Humph! You see one must always ask for it."

"Well, then, let's say no more about it."

"Oh, on the contrary, let's talk about it, since, if you will give me your permission, I will do for you what you refuse to do for yourself, and take the necessary steps. I have a number of friends in the ranks of the Opposition, and I am convinced that by getting two or three of them to put their shoulders to the wheel I shall secure your nomination for you."

"My good Dupeuty, you are very kind, but if it is to cost you the least trouble to—"

"Not at all. Simply authorize me to act as I think best and—it's just now the time when

rewards are being dispensed on the occasion of the New Year — and before a fortnight's out, you mark my words, your name will be in the 'Moniteur' amongst those who receive decorations."

"All right. So be it. Act as you think fit and accept my thanks in advance."

"Oh, you needn't thank me. It will please me, perhaps, more than it will you, to see you with the cross."

A fortnight, three weeks, a month, two months passed, without bringing me any news of my cross. I often used to see Dupeuty, however, but he never referred to the subject. It is true that I never questioned him about it. At last, one evening, thinking probably that he owed me at least an explanation, he said to me with a face about a yard long,—

"My friend, I am going to pain you — but you know what it is about. I deeply regret having to inform you that I have failed."

"Oh, indeed."

"Yes; the people to whom I spoke — three deputies of the Left, who have but to speak to get whatever they want — have absolutely refused to support you. They do not deny your popularity, oh, no! but they said to me, 'Ask that Paul de Kock be decorated! We! Why, if we did that the ministerial papers would not have enough jibes to cast in our faces! To expect Liberals to interest themselves in the author of 'La

Pucelle de Belleville' and of 'Le Cocu.' We should be insulted, hooted at, abused! If Paul de Kock wants the cross let him apply to the king direct. We should not be surprised if he gave it to him. It is said that Louis-Philippe is very fond of Paul de Kock, and that from time to time he sends a box of his books, together with some cases of prime champagne, to Queen Victoria (little presents keep up friendships). All we can promise is that, out of friendship for you, we won't criticise his nomination too sharply in our newspapers when Paul de Kock is appointed Knight of the Legion of Honor."

I scowled. Dupeuty paused an instant, then he continued,—

"I was afraid you would be vexed by what I am telling you, Paul de Kock, but you must admit that it's not my fault if—"

"I beg your pardon," I said, interrupting him rather dryly, "but it certainly is your fault, my good fellow, if under the pretext of rendering me a service which I did not ask of you, you have compromised my name and my character with individuals whose protection I, personally, should most certainly never have asked for."

"Why—"

"But you'll never get your three Liberal deputies to believe that it was not I who begged you to ask them to use their influence for my advantage, and it is that only which mortifies me, for I

care nothing for the rest. The moral to be drawn from this affair, my dear Dupeuty, is for you that one should not oblige one's friends in spite of themselves; and for me that it is folly to allow one's self to be obliged by one's friends in spite of one's self."

Excellent Dupeuty! In spite of all his efforts he had been unable to get the cross for me, and, without too much difficulty, I fancy, he obtained it not very long after for himself. It is true that he was the author, in collaboration with a score of colleagues, of about fifty comedies and dramas, nearly all of which were imbued with extra Liberal ideas. Now Republicans have always been readily decorated by monarchical governments. It is a way, if not of binding them, at least of preventing them from getting away. And an end of ribbon is not a costly affair.

Well, I was one of the first to congratulate Dupeuty, and upon my word he gravely accepted my congratulations without moving a muscle. I could have wished, for his own sake, that he had laughed a little.

Here follows an adventure which, whilst bearing upon the subject of which I am treating at present, refers also to the promise I made, in Chapter IV, to give a proof both curious and unknown of the kindly esteem with which Pope Gregory XVI deigned to honor my works.

It was in 1840, some months after the affair

which I shall call, "The Dupeuty Affair; or, Decorations which begin at Home." I was working one afternoon when a caller was announced. The gentleman would not give his name. "Can it be a second Villeneuve," thought I. But no, at first sight I could have no suspicion that my visitor had anything in common with an actor, much less with a solicitor of alms. He was a man of about sixty, all in black, with black kid gloves, a man of serious and yet easy manners. His clean-shaven face was distinguished-looking and keen, and I set him down at once as a foreigner.

Indeed, at the first words which he spoke I saw that I was not mistaken. He was an Italian.

"Sir," he began, "I am sorry to disturb you —"

"Not at all, sir. But may I know —"

"Who I am? I will ask your permission not to tell you that — if I am to tell it to you at all — until I have acquainted you with the object of my visit. And I will explain to you why. I am charged to make you an offer, which you may accept or which you may reject. In the first place, it is obvious that I must tell you who I am, because the offer in question will be realized through me; but, in the second place, the contrary will hold good. When you refuse a thing, it is hardly necessary to know who it is who has offered it. A refusal should suffice. Is not that so?"

"Quite right," said I, rather puzzled by the

stranger's mysterious manner. Good God! What was he going to propose to me? To join the Carbonari, or something of the sort?

He continued, smiling, as though he had surmised my vague uneasiness.

"And in the first place, don't be frightened, sir. Politics have nothing to do with the object of my visit. We know that you are one of the few writers who are content to depict life and manners without pretending to reform society with your pen"

I breathed again.

"In two words, this is what brought me here," continued the mysterious gentleman. "You cannot be in ignorance of the fact — since the French papers have often repeated it and it has never been denied by those concerned, which shows that it is true — that you are much liked at a certain Italian court. Very much liked. The highest person in this court has all your works in his library, and he takes pleasure in reading them, for he finds them always amusing and never pernicious."

I bowed. Although I did not yet quite understand, I at least was beginning to see what was in the wind.

"Well," continued my visitor, "well, I won't say in the name — that would be saying too much — but with the assent, the consent of this exalted personage, as a mark of his special esteem for your talent, I come to offer you a knighthood in an

order of which he is the supreme chief. An order which carries a name which is dear to every good Christian."

I bowed a second time.

"Do you accept?" asked the stranger.

"No, sir," I answered, "I refuse; but whilst refusing I beg you to rest assured of the gratitude with which your offer fills me."

"If the offer seems to you to merit your gratitude, why do you refuse it?"

"I might answer, in the first place, because I belong to the Reformed Church."

"Ah," said the Italian, suddenly becoming grave, "you are a Protestant?"

"Yes, sir. I belong to the same church as my father. But I do not put this reason forward, since, even were I a Catholic, I should still say, 'Your offer touches me and honors me but I cannot accept it.'"

"And you cannot accept it, because —"

"Because, in my opinion, when a man is not considered worthy of being decorated with the National Order by the government of his own country he has no right to accept a foreign decoration."

My visitor rose, and holding out his hand to me, said,—

"That reason is a decisive one, and it is also the only one which I shall give at home, where I am sure it will be justly appreciated. They will

regret, as I am the first to regret, that the want of justice with which your books have been treated by the authorities in your own country forces you to decline the rewards which may be offered to you elsewhere. And now, M. Paul de Kock, our conversation having had no other result than to give me the pleasure of making your acquaintance, will it be too much on my part if I ask you to allow me to withdraw without telling you who I am, but further —"

"To keep to myself the recollection of this conversation. No, sir, I promise it, I will tell nobody of your call; nobody!"

I have kept my promise for thirty years. Am I wrong in breaking silence today? Let those who think so blame me; many others I am sure will absolve me and agree with me that, with thirty years of discretion, I have sufficiently kept my promise. And now I can hear the mockers crying out, "Yes, but what does your story prove, since you are unable to give any names? It proves that you were probably the victim of some practical joke, that your visitor was probably some humbug who would have been in an awkward fix if you had taken him seriously with his order, 'dear to all good Christians.'" A practical joke! To begin with, my Italian did not look like a man of that sort — I vow it. And besides, practical jokes are only played on people who expose themselves to that sort of thing by their pretentious-

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Charles-Paul de Kock, *age sixty-three years.*

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL PORTRAIT BY BESTALL.

ness, their vanity, and I defy anybody to say that I have ever been pretentious or conceited.

Well, I have told this story because I think that it ought to have a place in my memoirs. Let people say what they like. It may be laughed at; I do not fear its being denied.

To return to my "scie."

During the first years of the present government I was fairly well left in peace. Like his uncle, Napoleon III, during the first eight or ten years of his reign, had the bearing of a sovereign who does not allow his hand to be forced. He did not decorate me. If the friends of my buttonhole were good enough to groan — to groan because my buttonhole remained empty — at least they no longer teased me with their expressions of condolence. But the emperor's hand relaxed — I suppose it wearied him to remain always so stern — and immediately the said friends got on their hobby again, and on every side, on every pretext, I was once more persecuted with these two phrases, "What! You are not decorated, Paul de Kock. But they absolutely must decorate you!" And had this only happened amongst friends! But in 1861 or 1862, on the occasion of the emperor's fête-day, a journalist wrote an article on this subject. That was the signal. From that day, never a New Year's Day, never an August 15 drew nigh, without one's reading in half-a-dozen newspapers, "Come, come, let us hope

that this time, at last, Paul de Kock will get his decoration!" These heartfelt cries were usually embellished with some such comments as the following: "Our poor old Paul de Kock, who so amused our fathers, at the very least they might give him this pleasure before he descends into the grave — Our poor old Paul de Kock, he would be so pleased to have the cross — They say that he is heart-broken at not having the cross — poor old Paul de Kock — He can't sleep at nights for thinking of it. . . ."

All this, no doubt, is charming in tone, if, as a statement of fact, it is wanting somewhat in accuracy. Of course, when a man gets old he knows the fact well enough; he knows it only too well. No need for anybody to tell it to him. But, leaving that aside, gentlemen of the press, if you could only know how your kind expressions of sympathy annoyed me each year, you would think twice, in future, before continuing to overwhelm me. On each New Year's Day in Paris, and on each August 15 in Romainville, I have not a minute's peace. One letter, ten letters, twenty letters come in, one after the other, all couched in some such terms as the following,—

"So you have got it at last, my dear Paul de Kock. Justice has been done to you. I hope that I am the first to offer you my congratulations."

Then my friends call, hastening to shake hands with the "new knight."

They come in.

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"So it's done at last?"

"What's done?"

"Why I read in last evening's paper that you have got the cross."

They have all read it, all. Their friendship willingly exaggerates facts. The newspaper had said that I was perhaps going to be decorated, and they had understood that I had been decorated. Why only last year I very nearly quarrelled with an old friend of my youth because he found me, on August 15, in my garden without my "ribbon" in my coat.

"You are wrong, my dear fellow," said he, very seriously. "Directly one gets it one ought to wear it."

"What ought one to wear?"

"Come, come. Is it because you have had to wait so long for it? Better late than never. Put it on, my friend, put it on at once, or else people will think you despise it."

Here is something still richer.

Four or five years ago, the evening before August 15, as my son was entering the stalls of a theatre, he was seized by the arm by a gentleman who, as I am told, is in constant communication with ghosts — a thing one would not imagine from his appearance.

"Well," said the gentleman to Henry. "You're pleased, I hope."

"At what?"

"What, you don't know it? Your father has been decorated. It will be gazetted in the 'Moniteur' tomorrow."

"Oh, if that's true, I should be very pleased, as you say, but—"

"But it is true; the decree has been signed. And I ought to know, the deuce! it was I who had his name put down on ——'s list."

He mentioned the name of a minister. I do not repeat the name thus taken in vain by a stupid, practical joker.

However, as the gentleman who was a friend of the spirits was reputed to be on excellent terms also with certain persons in very high places—persons whose dreams, no doubt, he interprets to them, as Joseph did to Pharaoh—my son grasped his hand and said,—

"In that case I have to thank you, both for my father and myself, my friend."

"Oh, there's no need to thank me, old fellow. It's long since I said to myself, 'Paul de Kock must be decorated.' Now he is. If I have helped it on a little I have done nothing but my duty."

The next day Henry came express to Romainville to tell me the news. I merely shrugged my shoulders, because, more perspicacious than he, I saw at once that it was untrue.

"But that can't be so," cried my son. 'Why should Z—— have told me a lie?"

"Simply for the pleasure of lying, my boy, nothing else. This gentleman wants to posture as a patron, and posture he did."

"And made a fool of me. It's a whim which may cost him a few cuffs."

"Bah. One doesn't get angry with humbugs. Give him tit for tat. When you next meet the gentleman to whom I owe my cross, tell him that I am very grateful to him, but that I am not entirely satisfied, and that whilst he is about it, and as he has such influence with the ministers, he might get me my nomination as Commander of the Order for New Year's Day."

But enough on this subject. I do not want this "scie" to worry my readers as much as it has worried me. So I close with this declaration, which I beg the journalists who are good enough to interest themselves in my buttonhole to take in earnest: I have never told a lie in my life, and I am not going to begin to tell lies at seventy-six. I may have wished for the cross, like any other man. I wish for it no longer. I wish for it no longer because, after having seen it bestowed in turn, during the last forty years, on most of those who entered on the career of letters as my juniors, if the cross were given to me today it would be less a reward of which I could be proud than a sop of comfort, and a useless one at that, because, as

I regret nothing, I don't want any comfort. In one word, I prefer people to say to me — "Why isn't he?" than that they should say what they say of so-and-so or of what's-his-name — "Why is he?" It is forty years now (I promised to speak out and I am doing so) since I ought, in my opinion, to have been decorated. I am not decorated, and never shall be. So let nobody say anything more about it, even as I shall not say another word on the subject. It will oblige me greatly.

Three or four years ago I met, one evening, on the Boulevard, Lambert-Thiboust, a witty vaudevillist, with whom I wrote the piece "Une Maîtresse bien agréable" for the Variétés, a good fellow, whose sudden death distressed me greatly. As we were walking together, he said suddenly, in a gust of effusion,—

"My word, M. Paul de Kock, I am speaking the truth. I should be ashamed to wear the cross, whilst you have not got it."

"Bah, my friend," said I, "don't be scrupulous. Decorate your buttonhole when you can, and don't trouble about mine. It'll do very well without the poppy-red."

"The grapes are too sour, Master Reynard," exclaims laughingly a journalist, who wants to have the last word on this subject, but who shall not have it, for I answer him without laughing,—

"No, monsieur, the grapes are not too sour for the fox, but the fox is too mature for the grapes.

His taste for grapes has passed; he no longer has any appetite for them."

Where did I leave off? As far as I remember, it was dining, in September, 1829, at the Hôtel de Ville, with M. de Chabrol, Prefect of the Seine, under the reign of King Charles X.

Well, some months later, on July 31, 1830, King Charles X was in flight, M. de Chabrol was no longer Prefect of the Seine, and at one of the windows of the Hôtel de Ville, in front of which I found myself on that day towards noon with my friend Pâris, I saw the Duc d'Orleans, with General Lafayette on his right, and behind him, Laffitte, Benjamin Constant and M. Viennet, waving a tricolor flag to the enthusiastic acclamations of the crowd.

Which meant to say, as Pâris, who was a deep politician at times, explained, that the Revolution was finished, well finished, and that we had every reason to rejoice, since the Duc d'Orleans had accepted the office of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, which had been offered to him by the Chamber, and the kingdom was in consequence going to be happier than it had ever been under any government.

"So there will be no more fighting in the streets?" said I to Pâris.

"Of course not, there'll be no more fighting; there will never be any more fighting. Charles X has become impossible, as you may conceive, my

friend, with his reactionary ideas. His last decrees concerning the press and elections were the finishing stroke. He has been turned out, and it's a good thing. Today the Duc d'Orleans has been appointed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom; in less than a week he will be made king."

"Ah, you think so —"

"I am sure of it. Lafayette has said so. He sees in him the best of republics."

"Oh, if Lafayette said so — As for me, all I ask is to be able, as soon as possible, to look out of my window without the risk of receiving a bullet in my head, and above all without the fear of seeing some poor wretch die on my doorstep without daring to go down and succour him."

"That is at an end, I tell you, my dear Paul, absolutely at an end. In less than a month all traces of these three terrible days will have been wiped out."

"Except, I suppose, in the hearts of those who have lost some one who was dear to them, a brother, a husband, a son."

"Oh! But what can you expect? One can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."

"Yes, yes, that's a very nice proverb for people who like omelettes, but not so for the hens."

It had been with the greatest reluctance that I went to the Hôtel de Ville with Pâris. A mob fills me with terror. I find that even when it is joyous it appears to be enraged. But when one

has been shut up at home three days and three nights, one wants at any cost to walk, to get the air. And the fact is, we had had a bad time of it, my wife, my children and I, in our apartment on the Boulevard Saint-Martin during the days of the twenty-seventh, the twenty-eighth, and the twenty-ninth of July, 1830. The Boulevard Saint-Martin was not then, as it is now, adorned for half its length (ought I to say, adorned?) with a sort of hollow causeway, fringed with heavy ramparts, but ran straight and level from the Faubourg to the Ambigu, a most favorable field for cavalry charges. And so there had been a good deal of fighting on my poor boulevard. The old elms which shaded it had been stripped of their finest branches, and the shutters of all the houses looked like sieves.

But what a thing curiosity is to be sure. My wife and I both knew very well that in looking out through the shutters during the fighting we exposed ourselves to the risk of being wounded, yet the temptation to look was irresistible, we wanted to look, and we did look, reproaching each other with our imprudence, our folly. A sad folly, at the best. The sight of men mortally wounded, rolling in their blood in the death agony, is an ugly one. The same sight was to be seen under my windows on the twenty-fourth of February, 1848, but that time I did not look on. I kept in the back room with my daughter, waiting till

the tempest had ceased, without desiring in the least to witness it.

However, Pâris had made no mistake, and from July 31 notices were posted at every street corner announcing that "Hereafter the Charter will be a fact," and the Parisians, lions though they were the day before, had become sheep. What did they want? That "the Charter should hereafter be a fact." This was promised, this was publicly posted up, so they buried their dead, and laughed as they bandaged their wounds.

However, as it is an averred fact that when the Parisians have once taken up a rifle they have the greatest reluctance to put it down again, a sort of National Guard had been organized throughout the whole city of Paris, for fear of an aggressive return of the royal troops, and it naturally became the duty of every good citizen to join it. I was of course a good citizen, and therefore I became a National Guard. I was on duty during four successive nights. Frédérick Lemaître, who lived in the same house as I did on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, in 1830, belonged to my company. He must remember, I am sure, a certain evening upon which our corporal came into the guard-room, looking very pale, and told us that something was expected to happen that night, that sham patrols had been sighted — that is to say patrols composed of the enemy, of Swiss guards and of gendarmes — and when, some minutes later, it was

a question of sending out a real patrol to reconnoitre, it was found that of the twenty-five men who had been there when the corporal came in, only seven were left. Gad! you know, it's not everybody who cares to face danger. And Frédérick Lemaître will confess that, like myself, though we had both stood our ground, he made no objections when the commanding officer, having stigmatized in energetic terms the conduct of the citizen-soldiers who had disappeared, ended his harangue by saying to the citizen-soldiers who remained,—

"Finally, gentlemen, since these cowards force us to it, hard as it is, as we cannot abandon the guard-room there shall be no patrolling tonight by true patrols. Paris will take care of herself without us."

Louis-Philippe, styled "the best of Republics," was accordingly proclaimed king of the French on August 9, and Pâris was not a little proud at having prophesied so truly.

"Now we are quiet," he said to me, "quiet forever."

"Humph, for ever?" said I. "Are you quite sure?"

And I began to sing,—

Ni jamais, ni toujours,
C'est la devise des . . . Francaise.[1]

[1] Neither never, nor always,
Is the motto of the French.

"I admit," said Pâris, "that the French are unstable. But what could they ever get better than they have got now?—a constitutional king."

"I don't know what the French could get better, but I say again that I shall be very astonished, if some day, even to get something worse, they don't serve Louis-Philippe just as they have served Charles X."

"Bah, Lafayette is there to keep the mob in order."

"Lafayette is no longer young."

"Bah! How old is he? Barely seventy-three. He has still ten years to live, and in ten years a government has time to get itself firmly established."

Pâris was a great admirer of Lafayette, whom he always called the "Veteran of Liberty." In the winter of 1831 he insisted on taking me to one of the general's evening receptions. I had refused to go, asserting, logically enough, that I had not been asked.

"There is no need to be invited to go to Lafayette's house," said Pâris, "Lafayette receives all comers, and he is pleased to receive them."

"Even when he does not know them?"

"Why should he know the names of his visitors? Is he not certain that they are all his friends? Come, you must go with me, Paul de Kock."

"But what figure shall I cut, a novelist, at the house of your great politician?"

"You need not look like anything. Nobody will take any notice of you, and the general least of all. You will make him a bow, he will shake hands with you, and that's all. You will then stroll through his drawing-rooms and look about you, and when you have had enough of it, you will leave."

A public drawing-room of this sort offered, indeed, a very curious study; so I accompanied Pâris to General Lafayette's.

It was a Tuesday, the general's day of reception. It was not yet nine when we arrived, yet the drawing-rooms were already crammed with visitors. They were not all faultlessly dressed, oh, no! I even noticed a great number of people who, if their means forbade them to wear gloves, could at least have washed their hands before entering. But no doubt these gentlemen thought that dirt is a sign of Liberalism. Besides, Lafayette's apartment was so plain, both in decoration and in furniture, as to defy these democratic liberties. We saw the general, we bowed to him, and, in accordance with the established programme, he gave us in return a cordial shake of the hand, which for my part, touched me deeply. People may have made light of Lafayette, Mirabeau may have styled him Cromwell-Grandison, and Napoleon may have treated him as a simpleton, yet he was by no means a nobody, this man who had been the friend of Washington, and who, although he had not

often played a brilliant part in the events which took place in turn in France, from 1789 on, had at least always acted as an honest man. And besides, he was a contemporary of my father; perhaps had known him.

In short, I did not regret my visit to Lafayette; the only thing I did deplore, was that for twenty notabilities, political and other, who were pointed out to me in his house I had met so many nobodies of evil mien.

But enough — reader, you agree with me? — on subjects which have a political odor. And so, to finish this first part of my memoirs to my liking and I hope to yours also, I have a great wish to leave aside all other stories, and to tell you the story of that summer residence of mine which has been the delight of my heart for close upon forty years, and which is still so today, in spite of the alterations, for the most part ugly, which time and men have effected in the neighborhood. Romainville — now called Les Lilas — Romainville is my Abbotsford — the Abbotsford of the popular novelist. Walter Scott had a castle, Paul de Kock has a cottage. But who has been happiest in his home, the owner of the cottage or the master of the big castle? Between ourselves, I would not put my money on Sir Walter Scott. For forty years I have worked, free and contented, at Romainville. I have laughed there with my friends, I have also wept with them — when death suddenly robbed me

of those dear ones whom one can never replace in life, my wife and my mother.

Well, then, let us begin the story of Romainville. You will find that it will not bore you.

First of all, I have already told you that my liking for that part of the country dated from my youth; I have told you that when I was twenty years old whenever I wanted to take a lady on an excursion on Sundays or holidays in the summer, it was to the Romainville woods I conducted her. And where, timing yourself by your watch, could you find a pleasanter hour's walk from Paris? And, mark you, it was an excursion for which you could dispense with a carriage, which was not its least advantage. Arm in arm we used to walk up the Faubourg du Temple and la Courtille; we crossed Belleville, passed along the road of Saint-Fargeau Park, leaving the telegraph to the right and the Pres Saint-Gervais to the left, and there, directly in front of us, was the country; fields of rye and wheat, divided off by bushes of red and black currants, where in autumn we used to pause stealthily, shaded by plum-trees and nut-trees from which we used surreptitiously to pick fruit. Surreptitiously, for the rural guards were on the watch there, and these rural guards of Romainville were not too well disposed towards the Parisians. At last the woods were reached, and here on the border of the woods was an inn, a good village inn, such as there used to be in those days, the clean

and simple appearance of which (it was called La Poule Russe, and is still standing) invited you to enter and refresh yourself. You could get Bagnolet wine there, the wine called picton. It cost four sous the bottle, and made excellent punch. In 1812, I knew a little artificial flower-maker who liked this punch made of little Bagnolet wine so much that when once she had taken her seat in the vine-covered arbors of La Poule Russe it was impossible to get her away. On three separate occasions I wanted to take her to Romainville, and on each occasion we did not get beyond La Poule Russe. I was forced to give in.

Although the forest was not of very great extent, it was still big enough for anyone who did not know it to lose himself in. I knew it as well as the inside of my pocket, and so, when I did lose my way there with one of my conquests, it was only to draw advantage from her terror. When women are frightened, they usually become very tender. I may be mistaken, and it may be that places and things seem more charming seen through the prisms of memory than they really were, but I will say that it seems to me that the Romainville woods were charming, far more charming than those in the neighborhood of Paris, both in the varying conformations of the land and the wild picturesqueness of its trees. One thing is certain, and that is that the avenues in it were not cut out in straight lines like those in the Bois de Bou-

logne or in the Bois de Vincennes. It was allowed to grow as it pleased, little wood for lovers and for artists as it was, without being regularly clipped and pruned and trimmed.

And as one walked down towards Pantin, skirting Madame de Montesson's park, what an admirable view opened out before one's eyes. Paris, and the whole plain of Saint-Denis, was stretched out before you in a fairy-like panorama. Thanks to this panorama, in 1816, I got the first kiss from a charming mender of cashmere shawls. My love, the wine-punch, an excellent lunch at the gamekeeper's house and a walk under the trees had not touched her heart, it was the magnificent view which tamed her.

"Ah, how beautiful," she cried.

"Not so beautiful as you are," said I. And, you must admit, I could say nothing else.

She smiled, I picked this smile from her quivering lips. An hour later she was calling me, "My dear Paul."

I have mentioned an excellent lunch at the gamekeeper's. Perhaps I have spoken rather too well of this meal, for, to tell the truth, that rascal of a gamekeeper, taking advantage of the fact that in those days there was no other house in the forest where one could get anything to eat, used to take very little pains in his cooking. Eggs and chops or chops and eggs, his bill-of-fare never varied. It was only in 1818 that a man called

Robert, one of Cambacérès' former cooks, was found intelligent enough to open a restaurant in the forest of Romainville, a house at the sign of Le Tournebride, which soon became famous. Robert was a character, as passionately devoted to his art as Vatel, and really cooking marvellously well. I had the pleasure of helping on his house by describing it in some of my novels, for which he always remained very grateful to me. The day on which he heard that I was coming to live in the district he "illuminated." By "illuminating," Robert meant getting tipsy. It's an excellent thing, and Hippocrates, as we know, recommends it, to exceed now and again, but it's very bad when drunkenness becomes a habit. Robert ended by illuminating so often that at last he went out altogether, after having completely ruined his establishment. His successor, who was but an indifferent cook, merely vegetated. Le Tournebride disappeared. There is a private hospital in its place today.

It was in 1818, also, that people began to let out horses — seeing what sums were to be earned in this way — for excursions in the wood. This was another reason why I often went there. I had never taken riding lessons and was, I admit, a very bad horseman; so bad, indeed, that I rarely got on horseback without alighting, at least once, head foremost. But one can never pay too dearly for a pleasure. I liked horse exercise, and the fact

that it did not like me did not trouble me. For more than ten years I never let a week go by without going for a gallop with a friend or two in the Romainville woods and in its neighborhoods, Noisy-le-Sec, Montreuil, Villemomble, Montfermeil. And, after I got married, I made my wife come out on horseback with me. That was selfish on my part, you will say. Say it, if you please. But my wife never said it, not she. My good and well-beloved Élise. She would have unhesitantly accompanied me in a balloon, if I had desired her. One day, however, a fall that she had in the wood, which might have been very serious in its effects, caused me to reflect. If I had the right to risk my own life, I had no right to risk that of my wife. From that moment her journeys on horseback ceased, and, as to myself, a cold bath which, together with one of my hired steeds, I had to take against my will in the pond at Bagnolet, cooled my equestrian ardor.

"We'll continue our excursions at Romainville," said I to Élise, "but we will go on foot."

"I won't deny that I like that much better," she answered, again without hesitation.

CHAPTER IX

Upon a certain day in the beautiful month of May, about two years after the stormy scenes of the revolution of 1830, my wife and I took a trip to Romainville. After partaking of a pleasant little breakfast, not at Le Tournebride, for you must know that Le Tournebride, though good, was frightfully dear, and as we were far from rich we were obliged perforce to be economical; we therefore had breakfasted on this occasion at a little restaurant then newly established on the road to Paris, where they served cooked to perfection sheep's trotters in white sauce, and where there was a fine skittle-ground. Having there refreshed ourselves, we were just about to enter the wood, when as we passed in front of a small house on the aforesaid road to Paris, which was close to Robert's place, our eyes fell simultaneously on a notice hanging to the shutter of a window, having this inscription, "For Sale."

"Wait a minute," said my wife, stopping short before the house; "don't you see that this house is for sale?"

"Well, what of it, my dear?" was my responsive interrogation.

"Well, what of it! You who like this spot so much. What can a cottage like that be worth? Not a great amount of money, surely."

"I don't know about that."

"Well, at all events we can look over it and ask the price. That won't bind us, just to look over it."

"That won't bind us, just to look over it." Women have arguments of their own. "That won't bind us." On the contrary that does just bind you, because, ten times out of twelve, one wants to possess what one has wanted to see.

But the cottage was so attractive, facing the south, with a garden in front. The garden was small also, about fifty feet long by forty broad. But that was quite enough for us. With a large garden a gardener would be necessary, and we did not want a gardener. I should think not. It was we and we alone who would plant our flowers and water them. My wife could already see herself at it.

We knocked at the door of the cottage. An old peasant opened it.

"What do you want?"

"Is not this house for sale? We should like to look at it."

"Oh, all right. Come in. I say, Françoise, here are some people come to look at the house."

"Well, show it to them. What an ass you

are, Cartery. Can't you see I'm washing. Do you think I'm going to bother about it?"

"But you know I've got to go to the field to hoe the potatoes."

"You can hoe them afterwards, hang it! These people are not going to stay here all day. It's not the Louvre that you've got to show them."

Monsieur and Madame Cartery did not receive the people who came to look over the house for sale in a very amiable manner. Why? This was soon explained to us.

We went into the garden where, on the right, near the well, the woman was engaged in her interesting washing. She did not condescend even to look at us.

"May I ask you, sir," said I to the husband, "if this house is yours?"

He made a face.

"It was mine only three weeks ago," said he, "but it doesn't belong to me now."

"Oh, and why is it for sale if you have already sold it?"

"I didn't sell it. It's the man who sold it to me who has taken it back and wants to sell it again."

"What do you mean by 'taken it back?'"

"Why, what I say. Because I didn't pay. That's what's the matter. Do you know M. Bernard?"

"Isn't he a former stockbroker who owns the Romainville forest?"

"That's right. Well, it's M. Bernard who had this house built, and many more in this district. It's a business of his to build houses which he sells at so much a year. Do you understand?"

"Oh, quite well."

"So that as long as you pay him he doesn't bother, but if you stop paying him, oh, then it's another story; he chucks you out like a bundle of dirty linen. And, unfortunately, you can do nothing because you've signed a paper which proves that M. Bernard has the right to take back his house if you can't give the money agreed upon. Ah, if I hadn't signed—"

"And what did you sign for, you idiot?" cried Madame Cartery from her washtub. "I told you not to sign."

"But if I hadn't signed we shouldn't have had the house—"

"Well, and now we haven't the house though you did sign; so I was quite right to tell you not to give your signature."

I now understood why the Carterys were in such a bad humor. They had been turned out for not paying and so they cared very little whether this house, which did not belong to them any more, found a purchaser or not. And however ready I might have been to pity them if their troubles had left them polite, if not honest, their rude tone and disagreeable manners inspired me with but little pity. So I asked no more questions and

devoted my attention to the house, which I inspected with my wife. There was on the ground-floor a room which could be used as a parlor, also a dining-room, a kitchen and a cellarette, and upstairs two bedrooms and three closets. And that was all.

"It's very small," said I to Élise.

"Small, oh no. There's plenty of room to live in here. You take the room in the front for yourself. I'll take the room at the back."

"And the children?"

"Henry can sleep in a closet near you, and Caroline will sleep in my room."

"And the maid?"

"The maid in a closet, like Henry."

"But these closets have sloping roofs, they'll be stifled in there. Your room has a sloping roof, also."

"Bah! In the country, what does that matter?"

"Ah, so you think one would be more willing to be stifled in the country than in Paris?"

"No, what I mean is that there is more air in the country, and that, consequently — Have you looked at your room, how pleasant it is? There's a balcony to the window, and there's a splendid view from the balcony. You'll be able to inhale the scent of the flowers there in the evening before you go to bed."

"The dining-room is very narrow."

"We'll dine in the drawing-room when we have any guests."

"There's no cellar."

"But there's a cellarette."

"The well in the garden is very ugly."

"We'll hide it with climbing plants."

"Oh, you've an answer to every objection. Well, so you like this house?—this cottage, for it's rather a cottage than a house."

"I like it immensely. I should like to be in it already. Just think how well you'll be able to work here, and how happy the children will be. To begin with, I'm quite certain that it will be a splendid thing for their health to pass the summer in the country. Ask the man the price."

I turned round to M. Cartery, who was waiting impatiently in the garden for us to let him go off to hoe his potatoes.

"Do you know the price of this house?"

"Hang it! do I know it? It would be a queer thing if I didn't know after paying a fifth of it. And I wouldn't so much mind if my thousand francs had been given back to me when I was kicked out."

"A thousand francs. So they want five thousand francs for it?"

"Yes, five thousand. With the legal expenses you can call it five thousand four hundred francs. Oh, they're not giving it away."

"And if we made up our minds to buy it whom should we have to see?"

"M. Bernard in Paris."

"Do you know his address?"

"No, I don't, but all you've got to do is to ask next door, at the Tournebride inn. M. Robert is sure to know it. When M. Bernard comes to Romainville he always lunches at the Tournebride."

"All right. Thanks and good-by."

We got M. Bernard's address. As we were returning to Paris my wife and I talked of nothing but of our house. And the road had never seemed so long to us. For in spite of all the objections I had made, I, too, was very much pleased with the little house. It was true that five thousand francs — for I intended to pay ready money, having always had a horror of debt — including expenses was a sum. But for some time past my novels and my plays had been bringing me in some money. I had been able to put by something with my "La Femme, le Mari et l'Amant" at the Nouveautes, and my "L'Homme de la nature et L'Homme police" at the Variétés; and I had besides a big play in hand for 1832, a play taken from my novel "Le Cocu," which I was to write in collaboration with Dupeuty. All that was troubling us was what to call the play, for we knew that the censor would not allow us to use the title of the novel. It was only at the last rehearsals that we found a title, or rather, to render unto Cæsar the thing that is Cæsar's, that Arnal, who played one of the principal parts in the play, found it for us.

"Call it 'Un de plus,'" said he, laughing. Neither Dupeuty nor I said anything, but we flung our arms round his neck. It was a real find, this title, which in three words said all that was to be said. It was a veritable godsend.

But to return to our house, our house which really became our house in a fortnight from the day on which we had first visited it. Oh, there was no delay about it. In a fortnight all legal formalities had been carried out, the Carterys had vacated the premises, and we were free to take possession of it.

How quickly that first year of our life in "our home" at Romainville passed by. If it be true according to the opinion of certain fanciful legists that "ownership is a theft," it must be admitted that this kind of theft is very excusable because of the pleasure it gives those who are guilty of it. We furnished our house as simply as possible, for having already so taxed my purse I could not and would not go to further expense. So it was I myself who, helped by my son, papered all the walls and stained all the floors. Whilst I was doing this, Élise began to map out the garden.

"This must be a basket of flowers next year," she said.

And she carried out what she had promised. The next year when the lilacs, the syringas, the rose-trees and the honeysuckle which she had planted were in bloom, and all the beds were full

of flowers of every kind, people used to stop in the road to admire our garden.

It was I who watered the garden. I no longer found the well so ugly — it supplied me with the means of refreshing to their fill my beds and shrubberies, yes, but not myself or mine. That was one of the drawbacks of the place at that time. There was no water to drink. Nowadays, water-carriers bring water from the Seine at Belleville and deliver it every day at the houses in Les Lilas, but in 1832 and up to 1836 we were forced to fetch our supplies from a spring in the fields a good way off. Henry was charged with this duty, and did not grumble at it because, when he came back, bringing the water in a little barrel on a wheelbarrow, he used to rest whenever he felt tired, and that was always when he was under some fruit tree or near some field of raspberries or strawberries.

When it was fine we used to breakfast or dine in the garden, in an arbor which I had manufactured. In the evening we used to sit in front of our house and watch the people going by, just like the small shopkeepers in the Marais quarter of Paris. And the small shopkeepers of the Marais are not so stupid; they do what it gives them pleasure to do. We often, also, used to go out for a walk at night, in the wood or in the fields. Not too late, however, for my wife was a little timorous. Indeed, when we first came to

live in the country she spent some sleepless nights at Romainville. The deep silence that prevailed made her uneasy. And then she found that the walls round our garden were not high enough to keep thieves out. I had bought a gun so as to reassure her. One night she came, all trembling, into my room.

"My dear—"

"What's the matter?"

"Robbers! I assure you there are robbers."

"In the house?"

"No, in the lane opposite my window, on the other side of M. Nonclair's house." (M. Nonclair, a man of private means, was our neighbor on the left, and Robert, the restaurant-keeper, was our neighbor on the right.) "I have heard them walking about, there are at least seven or eight of them. I am sure they are getting ready to climb over our walls."

It seemed to me very surprising that a gang of burglars should be making ready—in such an open manner (for had not my wife heard them walking about?)—to break into my neighbor's house. However, I got up, and, carrying my gun, followed Élise to her window. It was a dark night. No moon, no stars. We listened with straining ears for ten minutes. Nothing.

"You are mistaken," said I.

"Oh, no, I am sure I am not. Listen. Ah, do you hear now?"

And the fact was I did hear a low murmur of voices; the voices of men whispering.

"Fire a shot," said my wife.

"But—"

"But they'll see that we are on the look-out, and will clear off. I entreat you, my dear, fire, fire."

I fired.

Directly afterwards there was the loud noise of steps hurrying down the lane, like the steps of frightened folk running wildly in every direction. To be sure, I must have terrified the gang.

"They're running away," said my wife.

"I don't know if they're running away, but, at any rate, they don't seem to be running very far. They are stopping in the lane."

"Perhaps you have wounded one of them. The leader of the gang, perhaps."

"I should be very much surprised if that were so, for I fired in the air."

Suddenly the burglars seemed to quiet down. They stopped running. At the same time a loud voice cried out,—

"Who was it that fired?"

"Don't answer," said Élise.

"Yes, I must," said I. "I seem to know that voice." Then, aloud,—

"It's I who fired," said I.

"Who?"

"I!"

"You! M. Paul?" (They used to call me M. Paul at Romainville.)

"Why, yes; I, M. Paul."

"And why did you fire?"

"Because — because, in the dark, my wife thought and I thought — So you're not thieves, after all?"

"Thieves! What a joke. Why we're National Guards watching over the safety of the village."

National Guards! Deplorable mistake. I had fired at the patrol or rather, and fortunately so, over the heads of the patrol, for counting the killed and wounded there was nobody killed at all in this terrible adventure. It only cost me a few bottles of wine with which the next morning I treated the National Guards — peasants, neighbors of ours, for the most part people from whom we bought our milk and our vegetables. The wine was to compensate them for the shock I had given them with my gunshot.

For the rest, from that night on my wife slept more peacefully, quieted by the thought that she had no longer to fear burglars since the rural National Guards were watching over our home.

On Sundays we used to go and watch the peasants dancing at the Romainville forest ball, and when friends were with us we did not fear to mingle in the rustic quadrilles. The ballroom, situated opposite the gamekeeper's cottage, was nothing more nor less than a big open space with

a cemented floor, under the shadow of oaks and chestnut trees. The orchestra consisted of a violin, a violoncello and a trombone. For seats there were wooden benches. The lighting consisted of a dozen lanterns hung on the branches of the trees. Well, I assure you that the Romainville ball was very amusing, very amusing indeed, because of the droll visages and also the pretty faces that one saw there. And then in those days the peasants round Paris were not uncivil and rude, as almost all of them are nowadays; they did not bristle when they came in contact with mechanics and shopkeepers, and if we bumped up against them in dancing they did not shake their fists and call us aristocrats.

Amédée de Beauplan, who owned a charming villa in the forest, about two stones-throw from my cottage, near Madame de Montesson's[1] old château, used often to come with his wife and son to watch the Romainville and Bagnolet lads and lassies dance. Amédée de Beauplan was a clever man and a good fellow. He was a composer of light music and has left behind him a number of tunes which, in my opinion, are preferable to a good many grand opera tunes. His "Dormez, dormez, cheres amours," is a delicious melody; his "Pere Trinquefort" is a little gem. I had

[1] The Marquise de Montesson, whom the Duc d'Orleans, grandson of the Regent, had, it was said, married secretly, had caused this château to be built during the Empire, on the spot where today rises the fortress of Romainville (P. de K.).

made his acquaintance in Paris, in society; we became more intimate at Romainville. His wit was perhaps rather biting, but at least it was original. I have spent many pleasant hours of an evening listening to him as he sang to me, accompanying himself on the piano, the song or ditty which he had composed during the day. It was at his house that I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time an actress, Mademoiselle Plessy, who was a mere child at that time, but who was soon to win a great reputation. That was in 1834. How old was Mademoiselle Plessy in 1834? I do not remember, and even if I did remember it I should not say what it was; for it is only men who do not like women who are guilty of inquiring as to their ages. All that I can say is that she was very pretty. She often used to spend two or three days with Monsieur and Madame de Beauplan. One morning when I was shooting over the wood I suddenly met the young artist at the corner of a path, and I declare, odd as the comparison may seem, that I thought she was a hamadryad. Does Madame Plessy-Arnould remember this meeting of ours? Does she remember that, like a courteous sportsman and a friendly neighbor, I offered her for her luncheon table half a dozen sparrows which I had just shot? No, no doubt she has forgotten this trivial incident in her life. I have not forgotten it and I don't deny, now that I think of it, that

I wish I was back in the wood of Romainville, in 1834, saying to Sylvanie Plessy, my hamadryad,—

"Mademoiselle, will you accept my bag, six humble sparrows? A man shoots what he can and where he can. M. Scribe would offer you partridges; I offer you sparrows."

For during the second year of my stay at Romainville I had begun to shoot. M. Bernard, who owned the wood, had given me permission to shoot and hunt over all his estate, and I took an evil advantage of his permission, and so did my son, to massacre sparrows, finches and such small fry. As a matter of fact, there was no other game to be had, and so we could massacre nothing else.

"You would have done better," say you, "to have killed nothing at all." Well, that is just what we said to ourselves in the end. One day we got ashamed of killing the little birds who sang so prettily and who were so tough and tasteless after they had been fried, so we laid down our guns. After the insurrection of June, under the Second Republic, when as a precautionary measure the government summoned all good citizens to take their arms, no matter what they might be, to certain depots which were designated, I sent my gun and my son's gun — a child's small one-barrelled gun — to the mayor's office at Belleville. It was understood that they were to be given back. I can only say that I never saw them again. Republics certainly do keep all that they lay their hands upon.

Thus I gardened, I shot, I walked, I danced and I fraternized with the neighbors at my country house, but I worked also. Pleasure has never made me neglect my work. During the months of May and June I used to work at home in my room. Sometimes a good deal of noise was made below, in the parlor or in the garden, but noise has never prevented me from writing. People can laugh, talk and even sing in the room next to my study; that has never stopped the flow of my thoughts.

When the weather was very hot I used to turn the wood into my study. My wife had kept for me, "ad hoc," a large old woollen shawl for which she had no further use. I used to spread the shawl out on the grass to keep off the damp, and then, stretching out full length upon it face downwards, I used to write for three or four hours together without any fatigue.

A disagreeable experience, however, put a stop to this method of working. One afternoon as, with my shawl spread out upon the grass and I upon the shawl, according to my wont, I began to write, an odor which had not the slightest analogy with that of lily of the valley violently assailed my olfactory organs and counselled me to betake my camp elsewhere. I hastened to get up, and with my shawl in one hand and my manuscript and inkpot in the other I sought for a spot untainted by the tracks of tormented overtaken

travellers. Under the hazel-trees? Yes, the grass is tender and close, a veritable velvet lawn! Here I shall be as comfortable as a king. Again I spread out my shawl, and again I stretch myself out upon it. Hum! Hum! Fate is unkind to me today. The same, yes, the very same odor of a moment ago! Gad, the wood it seems has had today the visits of many a tormented traveller. Let's go still further afield. In this glade! Yes, here, at all events, I have nothing to fear. Not a shadow of a trace of anything that's nasty here.

Third attempt, and yet the same result! It's enough to make a man despair. I determined to go in and work at home.

Alas! Even in my own garden, indoors, I found myself pursued by this odor "sui generis" which had driven me from the wood. Whence came it! Ah, whence came it? You have doubtless divined the end of the story. Well, yes, it was the shawl; it was in the shawl itself. In carrying about my poor old shawl — which I had been careless enough to spread out on the very spot where I ought not to have spread it — I was carrying both the cause of the odor and its effect. Horrible cause! Ghastly effect.

I laughed afterwards about it, and I hope, however realistic you may find this tale, that you will laugh also; but from that moment I gave up working in the grass in the wood. Experience had dearly taught me that if "latet anguis in herba" there

is something still more repugnant than a serpent that grass is capable of concealing.

My friends used often to come and see me at Romainville; they came still oftener after an action which I brought against one of my publishers, an action which I lost, and which not only upset my modest treasury, but which during the two years through which it dragged was also an unceasing cause of sadness and discouragement. Oh! those two long years; even today when I think of them I shudder. I see once more all those legal gentlemen whom I had to meet every day about my "case," and my barrister also — a man of great merit no doubt (it was M. de Vatisménil, formerly Minister of Education under Charles X) — who had so cold, so severe a countenance. And my solicitor, who was always so busy that when I wanted ten minutes' conversation with him I had to wait two hours. And my business man, an ex-notary from the country who had been commissioned by one of my friends to advise me, to pilot me over the ocean of litigation, and who was a good pilot only after a copious luncheon — which meant that at least twice a week I had to stuff him with beefsteaks and bordeaux. I can see the Palais de Justice now. Does not its very name chill the sturdiest heart? The lobby, where litigants walk up and down, like souls in torment. The court-room, with its judges, with their heads in their hands as though they were asleep, and the

presiding judge, with his head against the back of his seat as though he were dreaming. I see "the other side" once more. Yesterday "the other side" was calling me "his dear Paul de Kock," today he looks at me in a sarcastic and threatening manner. I hear his counsel. What! This is a purely civil lawsuit, so why does he in pleading against me load me with insults? "Paul de Kock. Bah. Who after all is Paul de Kock? — A petty scribbler for the mob, whose talent is every day called into question, and not without reason. And as for the man — "

What, sir, you are not satisfied with attacking me — though I do not understand why you should attack me since it is my work that has enriched your client, since it is my work that you claim, in his name, as your property — you are not satisfied, I say, with saying and repeating over and over again that my work is worse than commonplace, but you must also turn me into ridicule and abuse and insult me as a man. Yes! And I, sitting in my place, have to listen to these insults, this abuse, without saying a word. If I were to retort my hostile advocate would order me to hold my tongue. He has the right to be insolent and a liar, and I have no right to cry out to him, "You are a scoundrel!"

Well, I did not want to think of all that — why have I remembered it? To shudder, as I did formerly, with indignation and with rage! Let

me calm myself. It is now close upon forty years since this unlucky lawsuit took place. Let us forget the wounds it inflicted, long since cicatrized, and let us think only of the friends who helped me to bind up these wounds.

My brothers, Henri and Jean-Pierre de Kock, to begin with. And here — there will never be a better one — is an opportunity for me to keep my promise and to speak in detail about my two brothers on my father's side. I seize it eagerly. It will comfort me to tell you of these good and noble fellows.

I told you in Chapter IV of this book that, on their return to Holland in 1795, Henri and Jean-Pierre had been adopted as its children by the Batavian Republic.

From 1795 on Henri was employed at the Ministry of War at Holland; in 1797 he went with the Ambassador Van Grasweld to the Congress of Rastadt, and soon afterwards went with him as second secretary to the Cisalpine Republic; but during their journey there this Republic practically ceased to exist, and Henri remained in Paris, attached to the Embassy, under Schimmelpenninck. On his return to Holland he became the confidential secretary of Admiral de Winter, with whom he made a diplomatic journey in the Mediterranean and visited Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Malaga, and Lisbon. In 1804 he was appointed colonel, chief of Admiral Verhuel's staff,

and fiscal of the little fleet which was sent, under English fire, from Flushing to Ostend, where an army was encamped under the orders of Marshal Davoust. In 1806 he left for Java with Grasweld, whom the great Pensioner Schimmelpenninck had appointed governor-general of the Dutch possessions in the East Indies; but in consequence of the accession of King Louis Bonaparte to the Dutch throne, Governor Van Grasweld was recalled with his staff, and General Daendels was appointed governor-general of the Dutch Indies in his place. De Kock, who had been charged with a special mission, and whose name was not mentioned in the order of recall, thought it his duty to continue the long and dangerous journey alone, and travelled under false names and qualities to escape the English cruisers. However, when he arrived in Batavia he found that his dismissal had preceded him. The ex-Governor Wisse, who was still on duty, appointed him his chief of staff and allowed him to keep his rank as colonel. Daendels soon arrived; he knew De Kock and had been an intimate friend of his father, and he allowed him to keep his rank and place. He took part in an expedition against a province, the chief of which had revolted. In 1810 Jansens took Daendels' place. In 1811 the colony was seized by the English, who sent the governor and De Kock, chief of the staff, to England, where they remained prisoners till 1814.

At this date De Kock returned to Holland and fought in the campaign of 1815 as a general in the service of King William I. He afterwards returned to the Dutch Indies, where he was appointed lieutenant-general and lieutenant-governor-general under Van der Capelle, the governor-general. He commanded the land and sea forces, and in 1821 he dethroned and made prisoner the sultan of Palembang, against whom two unsuccessful expeditions had previously been sent. In the end he established peace in the country.

He was recalled in 1830 by the king of Holland, who promised to appoint him governor-general and to arrange with him for the reorganization of Java. But the outbreak of the war with France caused him to be appointed commander of Zealand. He established his headquarters in Flushing and remained there till 1837. He was then created minister of the interior and grand chancellor of the two royal orders of the Netherlands. Shortly after the abdication of William I he retired from the ministry with the title of baron and the rank of grand officer of the royal orders of the Lion of the Netherlands and of William.

He had twelve children, several of whom hold high places in Holland today.

Jean-Pierre, my second brother, was appointed sub-lieutenant in the Dutch army in 1795, became a lieutenant in 1799, and captain in King Louis Bonaparte's Royal Guard in 1806. He fought

in the campaigns of 1812, 1813, and 1814, attached himself definitely to the French service under the Restoration, having naturalized himself as a Frenchman, and retired in 1831 as colonel of the 31st Infantry.

My brothers, as has been seen, had both made their way in different military careers. And the difference between the flags under which they served might have proved fatal to them, for, as a result of political events, had the colonel not retired after the revolution of 1830, his duty as a soldier might have forced him to march against his elder brother and his mother-country. I have also told you that as long as they lived[1] I remained on affectionate terms with my brothers. It is true that after 1831 it was only Jean-Pierre whom I saw often. He was living in Versailles with his wife and children, and used often to come and see me in Paris. As to Henri, my intercourse with him was limited, up to 1836, to an exchange of letters.

Well, in July, 1836, I had the joy of embracing both Jean-Pierre and Henri on the same day, at Romainville. I had written to Henri some weeks previously to tell him of the unfortunate issue of my lawsuit, and he came in person to offer me consolation and his purse. It was the first time since 1793 that we had been together; we

[1] The general died at The Hague in 1845; the colonel at Lille in 1858 (P. de K.).

did not tire of looking at each other and of embracing. My mother, who was of course present at the interview, shed tears. The general, it appeared, was very like our father. "It's he," she kept saying, "it's Conrad de Kock in the flesh." Ah, I must mention here that after the death of M. Gaigneau my mother had absolutely insisted on resuming the name of De Kock. She perhaps had no strict legal right to do so, but—

"M. Gaigneau," said she, "exists no longer, there is no longer a Madame Gaigneau. I prefer to be Madame de Kock. I regret that I did not always remain Madame de Kock, so I now become Madame de Kock once more."

What could one say to that?

Besides my brothers I may mention amongst those who hastened to offer me their assistance, knowing me to be badly hit, Count d'Orsay, an amiable English gentleman, with whom for some years past I had been on terms of courteous intercourse. I thanked the count. With the help of my brothers I was in a position to pay over to my victorious enemy the sum which Dame Justice had condemned me to pay as damages for the injury — which he had caused me. Before we parted Count d'Orsay asked me to write a few lines, which he promised to convey to the proper hands, to Bulwer-Lytton, the celebrated English novelist, who, the count assured me, evinced the greatest admiration for my works.

I wrote to Bulwer. A week later I received the following letter:

ALBANY, LONDON, October 20, 1836.

DEAR SIR:— Permit me to express my sense of the honor you have done me in the letter I have received thro' the friendly offices of Count d'Orsay. I am charmed to find that my long-cherished view of the true tendency of your writings is supported by your own aims and ends. Perhaps, for it is well to speak frankly, I may regret that the irresistible dictate of a rich and unrivalled humour should sometimes have pursued a moral end thro' means easily mistaken by the herd, and still more, that your views of that morality which relates to the sexes should be essentially different from those common in this county — where it is outward morality that is rigidly inculcated. I mention this not from the presumption of reproach, but because I have found some difficulty in clearing the way to a just appreciation of your lofty merits, the beautiful goodness of heart and the profound and often magic philosophy that forms the undercurrent of a comic stream more racy and powerful than that of any other writer I am aware of. In the "Edinburgh Review" of January next I trust to embody my views of your genius in a manner that I trust will be agreeable to you. Whatever qualification may occur will arise not from myself, but from the scruples of the editor. But I trust to render such qualification unnecessary.

I scarcely know how to condole with you on your losses. Genius is given to man as a compensation for a thousand evils and afflictions, that seem almost invariably to accompany it. And your genius takes so bright and benignant a view of life that I trust it is but the reflection of a joyous temper and an all-sufficing heart.

Pardon me for addressing you in English. I am not sufficiently acquainted with your own language to trust to my knowledge of it for the expression of my enthusiastic admiration and profound respect. I am, my dear sir,

Your most obliged and devoted Servt.,

E. LYTTON-BULWER.

Bulwer was right. I am unable, I do not know how, to be sad for any length of time. After the lapse of a few weeks I had forgotten all about the action I had lost. I had sought after fortune, and that under outside pressure, for, as for myself, I had not the slightest ambition. Six thousand livres a year in my old age, and the faculty of working up to my last hour, was all that I wanted. I had counted on large profits realized in a literary speculation which I thought I had every right to patronize, and, on the contrary, it turned out that another had a better right than I, so that, to punish me for having made a mistake, I was stripped of a part of what I possessed. Well, there remained to me courage, health and youth — for I was still young in 1836; there remained to me all those whom I loved and who loved me, my wife, my mother, my children and my brothers; there remained to me my pen, my little apartment on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, my cottage at Romainville, my cat. Don't laugh at me. Amongst animals, it is cats that I am fond of. And why not? You say that cats are ungrateful, selfish, capricious animals, which have no affection for their masters but only for the houses where they live. Those are old stereotypes, worth only their price as old metal. I maintain that cats are as capable of affection as dogs, and are superior to dogs in gayety, intelligence and gracefulness. I have owned cats which I would not have sold for their weight in

gold; especially one called Frontin, who lived from 1830 to 1841. Frontin was no cat; in goodness of heart he was a poodle, in sobriety a camel, and in intelligence a monkey. In the summer he used to follow me when I took my walks in the woods of Romainville. In the winter he never left my study. Curled up all day long on a cushion near my writing-table, he slept as long as I was working — or pretended to sleep so as not to disturb me — but as soon as I rose he used also to get up, arching his back and fixing his yellow eyes on me as if to say: "Now we can have a chat, can't we?" And indeed we used to chat. I petted him and talked to him and he used to answer me. He had different mews for each thing; to ask for food, for drink, for permission to go out, for leave to jump on my knees or to lick my hand, to wish me good-morning in my bed, and good-evening at night.

But I have written enough about my Abbotsford-Romainville number one. We will now, if you please, pass on to my Romainville-Abbotsford number two.

CHAPTER X

It must be conceded as an incontestable truth that man is never satisfied, and that indifferent to the wisdom of all the proverbs and axioms ever uttered, when one is well off one invariably wishes to be better off.

We, that is myself, my wife, and my children had spent ten happy summers in my cottage at Romainville, but not content with this I began to wish to own a real house and a real garden. Yet I dared to state that I was not an ambitious man.

In self-justification, reader, let me state that as a matter of fact as time went on my country house had become much too small for us all. My children, who were small when we first went to pass our summers at Romainville, had grown up, my son was a man, my daughter was a young lady; and, really, if as little children I had, from sheer necessity imposed by lack of room, allowed them to sleep during six months at least of each year in closets where they knocked their poor craniums against the ceiling, I could not continue to do so now that they were grown up without appearing as an unnatural and inconsiderate father.

"If you wish me to love the paternal roof,"

Henry used to say to me, "raise it a metre." And he was quite in the right.

But it happened that contiguous to our little cottage was a house which its owner (a dealer in Rouen goods, called Salmon) wanted to sell, in 1842. It was the house of my dreams. Placed between two gardens, in each of which my little plot of ground could have danced a saraband; and such gardens, planted with ornamental trees, and fruit-trees and vines in full bearing. In one was an arbor in which forty people could dine comfortably; in the other was a lawn where a company of national guards could have manœuvred with perfect ease. And there was a rustic kiosk in one of the gardens! And two entrances, one on the south side, opening on the avenue which led to the château, and the other on the north, opening on to the Pantin road. And the house! There were four bedrooms, a drawing-room, a dining-room, a study, a bathroom, kitchen, pantry, billiard-room — a billiard-room. I was to have the billiard-table if I bought the billiard-room. Now I am very fond of billiards. Between ourselves, I am fond of all games, but I have already told you of my tastes in this respect.

I will abbreviate. The price which M. Salmon asked for his house was not excessive. I paid him the sum, and, in May, 1842, we took possession of our new domain, my Abbotsford number two. I kept on my number one, however. It would have grieved me to part with this little

house, so I let it. It was recently tenanted by a dealer in hair, and this was very convenient when I wished to renew mine. For I won't hide the fact that for a long time past I have been wearing what the French actors call a "head-warmer," a wig. Nature had given me hair; time and work, I suppose, have taken it all away; and so, not out of coquetry, but to avoid chronic colds in the head, like Father Ducantal in "Les Saltimbanques," I have repaired as far as possible time's outrages and labor's wounds. And whilst I am making these confessions I may as well explain why at sixty years of age I began to wear a mustache, an ornament (if ornament it be) which till then I had always despised. Ah, well, it's only another artifice to hide the disagreeable work of time. I have no longer any teeth, and a mustache covering the upper lip prevents people from seeing that the upper lip covers nothing. The only consequence is that my friends say that I look like an old general. I don't mind such a comparison in the least; it's not everybody who can be an old general.

I am joking, and I almost blame myself for this levity when the progress of my story is about to oblige me to recall the memory of one of my greatest griefs, the death of my wife. Oh, I loved her well, my Élise. I loved her — not as I see so many men pretending to love the partners of their choice, with words and phrases. On the contrary,

I loved her without telling her so; and I had no need to tell her that my heart was hers, that her happiness was my delight, to assure her that these things were so. Who was she? When had I married her? That is no business of yours; I am not in a confessional here, I am relating my memories. One thing of which I can assure you is that she was the most virtuous and the most worthy of women, and that I married her because I adored her. She had spent many an evil day with me without complaining; winter days, when we had no fire because we had no money with which to buy wood; summer days, when we took the air at our window because she had no bonnet or no dress to walk out in. Often, I must admit it, I had given her cause for sorrow — for she was jealous, and had often reason to be so — but even then it was in secret that she used to weep, and when I reproached her for having red eyes she would quickly try to smile, saying, "But you are mistaken. If my eyes are red it's perhaps because I have been too long at work."

And the fact is that at times she used to work very hard — and that it was necessary that she should do so.

And it was just when life was beginning to smile on her, just when she was calm and happy in the present and the future, that death took her from me while still quite young. She was forty years of age. Oh, it seemed as if a secret presentiment

of her approaching end struck her on the very first day that we entered our new home.

She was walking in the garden.

"Are you pleased?" said I.

She made no answer, but stooped to pick a flower.

"Do you hear?" I resumed. "Are you pleased with your grand house?"

She turned her face towards me. A tear moistened her cheek.

"Do not scold me," she murmured, "don't be angry."

"Why—"

"Why, I am a silly woman. There! I loved the little house better."

On the twenty-second of September, 1842, I had gone to Paris after dinner to keep a business appointment, and as it happened that on the next day but one there was to be given the first performance of a play taken from Eugene Sue's novel "Mathilde," at the Porte Saint-Martin theatre, I arranged to go and ask the brothers Cogniard, the managers, for seats.

I had, however, intended to return to sleep at Romainville, as Élise was not feeling very well that day and had complained of pains in her head. But it was she herself who had opposed my wish.

"No, no," she said to me, "you may perhaps be kept late at the Porte Saint-Martin getting places, and I don't want you to come back here

after ten o'clock at night. There are often bad characters about at night on the road, so you had better come home tomorrow morning."

"But you are not well. Supposing you get worse in the night?"

"Oh, no fear of that. I had a headache; it's over now, so don't be uneasy."

"So don't be uneasy." And that night, towards midnight, the poor woman, dragging herself as best she could from her room to her daughter's chamber, woke her up, saying, "Quick, quick, Caroline! I think that I am going to die."

Caroline was at that time barely twelve years old. Imagine this unhappy child, with only a servant to help her, for by a cruel fatality Henry also was away from Romainville that night, imagine the poor little girl on her knees by the side of the bed on which her mother is dying of cerebral congestion, hearing her repeat, with a voice ever more stifled, "I am dying, and, oh, my God, your father and your brother are away."

I was fetched at two o'clock in the morning in Paris by a good fellow of a workman, who had been despatched by the servant, and who ran all the way. I could not believe in the extent of my misfortune. Can a man believe that those whom he loves can die? Those one loves seem one's self — one feels so strong, why should one despair? And yet how long that nocturnal cab-drive from the Boulevard Saint-Martin down there

seemed to me. I had given gold to the driver, but I had not been able to give him a good horse. I arrived at last — I rushed in. Ah, that face that but a few hours ago I had seen smiling was like marble, like the face of a statue representing the last and fearful expression of a terrible anguish. Those lips which till now had pressed mine were icy cold. Those eyes which ever told me "I love you," were without expression. Yes, they had an expression, a terrible expression, the look of the dead. A look which those who have seen it never forget, a look which seems to say, "I have no more tears; have tears for me."

And what added to my despair was the thought that if I had remained with her I might, perhaps, have been able to save her.

We buried her in the village cemetery at Romainville. The village peasants carried her coffin in turns. They all loved her; she was so good. My children followed her to the tomb with my friends. As for me I was alone in my room, still wondering if, indeed, my Élise had left me for ever.

It is now three weeks since I laid down my pen and stopped working at this book. Pardon me, reader, for, look you, at seventy-six a man cannot with impunity rest his eyes on a tomb. I was sad. I wished to recover my composure.

I had had seven children by my wife. Only two lived, a son and a daughter, Henry and Caroline.

Of Caroline I will say but one word, which sums up all the praises I might bestow upon her. She has rejected ten offers of marriage because she did not wish to leave me in my old age in the hands of strangers.

Of Henry, who as a man has always acted towards me as a loving, respectful, and devoted son, I shall speak as a novelist at length in the chapter in which I shall presently deal, from my point of view, with the good and bad qualities of the writers of our age. For after all I suppose Paul de Kock is not forbidden to say of Henry de Kock—because Henry de Kock is his son—what he thinks of his talent, good and bad, and good rather than bad, let me say so at once without any shame.

One thing is certain, and that is that my son owes his reputation to his industry and to his talent alone. His name is "Paul," like my own, so he might sign "Paul de Kock fils." The publisher who bought his first novel offered him a thousand francs additional if he would use that name, but he refused.

"I may or I may not succeed," said he, "but I won't carry on a business; I will try to establish one for myself."

Now as sons go today perhaps more credit than one thinks is due to Henry de Kock for having refused to be the son of his father in anything more than filial affection. Like myself Henry

earned his first money as a clerk. I was not rich enough to provide for all his wants and all his pleasures. So, whilst seeking his way in letters, he bravely accepted a situation in a private business, called L'Entrepot des Douanes or Entrepot des Marais, and remained there till his pen as a novelist and dramatic author was sufficiently productive to warrant him in casting aside his pen as a clerk, which occurred about ten years ago.

For the rest, he was not worked to death at this Entrepot des Marais. I sometimes used to go there and see him, in company with a friend, for an excellent reason. He had to keep an account of the liquids, all of the first order, foreign wines of warranted authenticity, madeira, port, sherry, pakaret, marsala, genuine rum and tafia. Varin, especially, Varin the vaudevillist, used to like to come with me to the Entrepot to study the body of such and such an Italian or Spanish wine.

During one of these visits Henry told us the story of something that had happened in his office. It is worth repeating, as one of our greatest poets — the greatest of all, perhaps, but that political passion slightly spoils his genius — played a part in it in spite of himself.

Everyone knows when merchandise or other goods are delivered at the bonded warehouse a permit is sent with them, and on the top of this permit is written the name of the consignee.

Well, one day, in 1845 or 1846, twelve barrels

of tafia (a kind of rum) sent from la Martinique — each of a capacity of three hundred and fifty to four hundred quarts — were sent to the stores in the Marais, accompanied by a permit, at the head of which was written, "To M. V. Hugo, Paris."

The head-clerk of this bonded warehouse, who prided himself on his knowledge of literature, gave a cry of delight as he read this address.

"Henry," cried he to my son, "Look here — twelve barrels of tafia addressed to Victor Hugo."

"Twelve barrels, heavens! How many quarts?"

"Altogether — four thousand, five hundred quarts."

"Four thousand, five hundred quarts. By Jove! What will he do with so much rum, the great man?"

"That's his business. My business is to inform him of the arrival of his rum, and that is what I am going to do. What luck, if he should come in person to pay the duty. I am dying to know him! Oh, I'd really give twenty francs to see him face to face."

The letter of advice was despatched to the Place Royale, where Victor Hugo was living at that time, but, contrary to the hopes of the Hugo-worshipping head-clerk, it was not the poet who came to the warehouse, but a sort of steward, who brought the money for the duty on one barrel.

And so on for about six months. On two further occasions Victor Hugo's steward returned to

fetch the tafia, but never the poet showed his face. Olympus persisted in hiding himself in the clouds.

The head-clerk tore his hair; later on he was to have still further reasons for tearing it.

Towards the end of the sixth month, in July, after the delivery of the third barrel of tafia to the great man, a gentleman presented himself one morning at the warehouse, and addressing himself to the manager,—

"Sir," said he. "I have come to pay the duty on twelve barrels of tafia from Martinique, branded V. H. which were delivered at the warehouse in February last."

"Very well, sir. Your name, if you please."

"Vincent Hugo."

"Vin — cent Hugo!"

The head-clerk turned pale, a terrible thought struck him. He consulted his books and the bills of shipment which M. Vincent Hugo laid before him. O heavens! The tafia delivered to Victor Hugo is the tafia claimed by his namesake — in all but the forename.

Surprised at his confusion, the stranger asked,—

"What is the matter. Has anything happened to my tafia?"

"No, that is to say, yes. Your address was not on the permit, was it, sir?"

"No, they could not put it there. I do not live in Paris and only come here for a few months to sell my goods."

"Oh, it's a great pity, sir."

"What?"

"That we didn't know. If only they had put M. Vincent Hugo on the receipt — Vincent in full."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, then I should not have supposed that this rum belonged to M. Victor Hugo, the poet. You can quite understand. I saw, to 'M. V. Hugo, Paris,' and of course I read it as Victor Hugo. And as there is not and cannot be in Paris, in France, in Europe, in the universe but one Victor Hugo, I advised him of the arrival of his rum and —"

"He fetched it from the warehouse?"

"No, sir, not all! As yet he has only cleared three barrels, about a thousand quarts."

"Well, I am very sorry for you, sir, but if you have delivered goods to M. Victor Hugo which do not belong to him, it's not he, but your firm which is responsible, and it is your firm that I shall ask to make good its error. I have the honor to wish you good-morning. The business is no longer in my hands, it is in the hands of my solicitor."

M. Vincent Hugo went off, leaving the head-clerk in a state of stupor and despair. And the best of it was that passing suddenly from admiration to contempt, he began to loudly accuse the poet of being the sole cause of all his trouble.

"Would any one believe it," he shouted. "Could any one believe it of Victor Hugo? The rum does not belong to him, and yet he coolly takes it?"

"He takes it because you wrote to him to tell him to take it," said my son.

"I wrote to him! I wrote to him! But he must know that he was not expecting four thousand, five hundred quarts of rum from Martinique —and consequently he had no right to receive them."

"And why not? One often receives things which one does not expect. It's obvious that Victor Hugo thought this was a present."

"A present of twelve barrels. Is that reasonable?"

"At any rate this present had its charges. Victor Hugo has paid the duty on the three barrels which he has cleared."

"The duty, a hundred francs on each barrel! That's a fine lot. And I just ask you what has he been able to do with a thousand quarts of rum in six months. He can't have drunk a thousand quarts of rum in six months, I'll be hanged if he can."

"Oh, as to that I can say nothing."

"But he'll have to say it. He'll be forced to say it. And you'll see that he will be sentenced by the courts to return the goods of which he illegally took possession, or to pay their value."

"Oh, I think you are making a mistake there."

He was making a mistake, as it turned out. The action which M. Vincent Hugo had threatened was brought against the office, and was tried in the Commercial Court. Victor Hugo having established his absolute "bona fides," by stating that he had taken this quantity of rum to be one or more of the magnificent presents which were sent him every day from all parts of the world by admirers of his genius, was discharged from the case, and the company of the Entrepot des Marais, as sole defendant, was condemned to pay M. Vincent Hugo the value of the three barrels which had been wrongly delivered.

"Well, after all," said the head-clerk, who had been severely rapped over the fingers by the board after this judgment had been delivered, "What I should like to know is what this fellow Victor Hugo can have done with a thousand or eleven hundred quarts of rum in six months."

"He stated it in court. He exchanged it with his wine merchant for claret and burgundy."

"Exchanged it, did he? But he's no poet at all, this poet; he's a dealer, a grocer. A man sends him a present — at least he thinks it's one — and he exchanges it."

And shaking with vexation, like a fox who has left his tail behind in a trap, the quill-driver concluded,—

"All the same you won't find me again running

after great men — fancying them in everything. It's too expensive."

To return to Romainville, my Abbotsford number two, which was very sad and very empty for my children and myself after the death of their mother, my wife. During the summer of 1843 we received nobody there.

But all grief is assuaged. And it is one of God's kindly dispensations that our most poignant regrets transform themselves into a memory whose very bitterness is not without a consolatory sweetness. Joy returned in 1844, together with the sun. In 1845 I bought a part of the wood which lay opposite my villa on the castle side. Two acres. And it was not only with a view of extending my estate that I decided on this purchase. The Romainville wood was decreasing year by year, parcelled out into building lots, and seemed likely soon to be wiped out altogether, and I was anxious to preserve a piece of it at least for myself. I enclosed my wood with walls, and there, as I was walking one evening, Benjamin Antier said to me,—

"All that's now wanting in your domain, Marquis of Carabas, is a theatre."

"It will soon be lacking no more," said I. A month later my theatre had been built in the middle of the wood. It was a theatre the like of which is rarely seen. Yet, like any other theatre, it had a stage, wings, footlights, and scenery. But

it was in the part for the audience that it differed from ordinary theatres. The part for the audience was a clearing in the wood. The public seated itself on the greensward under the trees; the ladies alone had a right to chairs. My children and my friends were the actors; I was the orchestra. I played the violin for dramas, the piano for comedies and vaudevilles.

There was a play three or four times in the season at Romainville. We played "La Foret perilleuse" and "Roderic et Cunegonde," in an amazing manner, I dare say it. In "La Foret perilleuse," notably, M. Grassot had an unprecedented success in the part of a postman, improvised by himself, bringing a letter into the cave to the ferocious brigand chief. We played "Estelle ou la Pere et la Fille," from the Gymnase, in a way which I would certainly defy the actors of the Gymnase to imitate. They may take this statement which way they like. We played operettas which would have made the Bouffes-Parisiens and the Variétés lick their chops. And we had singers, too, to sing in our operettas. Léon Achard (let him not deny it), Léon Achard, one of the first tenors of the present day, made his début at the Romainville theatre.

All the people of the village, seated on the walls which enclosed my wood, watched these really extraordinary performances with eager astonishment. Why, if I had wanted to sell tickets for seats to

the rich people in the district I could often have taken splendid sums. In 1854 an Englishman wrote to me and offered me two hundred francs for a box. I answered that I could not reserve him a box, for there were none, but that if he knew how to climb trees there was the stout branch of a chestnut-tree at his disposal.

After the play there was a dance in the drawing-room, or on the lawn in the garden when the weather was too hot to dance indoors. Then, as the day was breaking, there was supper, or, seeing the hour, breakfast in the arbor. The ladies sat down to table first and were waited on by the gentlemen; and then the gentlemen, who also were often waited on by the ladies. We laughed at the play, we laughed during the ball, and we laughed at supper; and we went on laughing after supper, and often fell to dancing again and kept it up till noon, when we separated, still laughing at the hope of meeting again for a similar jollification as soon as possible.

Would you like me to give the names of the people who were habitués at my house in Romainville during a period of fifteen years?

They were: MM. Henry Monnier, Hippolyte Cogniard, Benjamin Antier, Barrière, Charles Desnoyers; Meyer, at that time manager of the Gaîté theatre; Mourier, manager of the Folies-Dramatiques; Villeneuve, the vaudevillist; Siraudin, Varin, Boyer; Metzmacher and Nargeot, the

engravers; Fontaine, from the Sèvres porcelain factory; Court, Barrias, Regnier, Eustache Lorsay, Worms, Belin; Devoir, the scene-painter, who painted the scenery for my theatre; Mène, the sculptor; Guennepin, the architect; Cazelles, deputy of the Hérault department; Count de Rougrave, Captain de Bernard de Seigneurens, Doctor Benoit, Charlieu, Hippolyte Souverain, Alexandre Cadot, Sartorius; Hervé, the musician; Achard senior and Léon Achard, Sainville, Ravel, Alcide Tousez, Grassot, Lhéritier, Laferrière, fat Laurent, Vollet and Joucault.

Joucault was simply a stockholder, but a stockholder who had the glory of being a friend of Rossini's. It was he who procured me the honor of a visit from the illustrious maestro, a visit which you may be sure I was very glad to return. Rossini wanted to see Paul de Kock, Paul de Kock wanted to see Rossini; they met twice, at each other's houses, and each time embraced each other most heartily.

Charles Monselet, the witty writer, has often sat down to my table at my big Abbotsford, but he has never seen it in the splendor of its amusing fêtes, and had he wished to do so it would have been impossible, for, alas! there are no fêtes at my house nowadays.

It is not my fault. It's the fault of old age, of illness. My disposition has not changed. I should be just as happy now as I was formerly to see

happy faces around me — but I'm seventy-six years old. I might almost say seventy-seven, for my birthday is close at hand — and I have the gout. At seventy-seven, with the gout, Roger Bontemps himself would have given up spending his nights in drinking, dancing, playing, eating and laughing.

Finally, if old age has forced me to be wise, I remember that it was not always so, and that is in itself a pleasure . . . . . .

DEATH OF CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

A Note by His Son, Henry de Kock

Death prevented my illustrious and revered father from finishing his memoirs.

He began the volume which is now before us, as he has told us, in 1869, and worked at it from time to time at his leisure till the summer of 1870.

The political events which then took place upset him, and whom did they not upset in France during that fatal period? What French writer would have had the courage to work at a time when the country, having madly entered upon a terrible struggle, seemed day by day nearer to its final downfall?

During the miseries and deprivations of the siege of Paris, a private sorrow was added to the anxiety which my father felt for the destinies of France. He learned that his place at Romainville, the place where he had spent so many happy summers, had, so to speak, ceased to exist. The wood, cut down in part for fuel for the troops, had been afterwards levelled by a gang of miserable marauders and thieves, and the house had been pillaged and sacked.

Everyone knows what followed on the termination of the war with Prussia. A new war broke out more frightful than the first. A fratricidal war. A war of Frenchmen against Frenchmen.

During the two months of the execrable commune my father never once left his apartment. I used often to go and see him. He used to spend his days seated in his armchair, near his window, motionless, silent and sad. He, sad! That showed how much he was suffering.

When fighting began in the street my sister begged him in vain to seek refuge with her in some safer part of the town.

"Where do you want to go?" he answered. "People are being killed everywhere."

The Porte Saint-Martin theatre was in flames, a few paces off. Deaf to all entreaties he stretched himself out on his bed, which was in a room lighted up by the glare of the fire without, and said, "I may as well die here."

But he did not die then; the bullets and the flames spared him, but he could not long resist such emotions, such sorrows.

The month of June passed by. Order appeared to be re-established. He wished to go to Romainville.

"Don't go this year," said I.

"Why not?"

"Because you are not strong enough to bear the sight of your disasters."

"I am a philosopher, as you know."

"And besides there are Prussians still at Romainville."

"Well, are the Prussians as bad as these bandits of the Commune?"

He went. I cried when I saw our poor little wood all levelled to the ground.

"Bah," said he with a piteous smile, "That'll all grow again."

He brought furniture to his house to replace the furniture that had been stolen — and it had all been stolen; he set workmen to repair the doors and the casements which had been burnt, and gardeners to plant trees and flowers in the garden. And carpenters, locksmiths, house-painters, masons and gardeners, he urged them in their work from morning to night, as though he divined that he should never see it finished.

Indeed, towards the middle of August his strength visibly gave way. For a long time past he had lost his appetite and could not sleep at nights. He would not hear of a doctor. He did not like doctors. Soon his state got so bad that my sister insisted on his return to Paris. As soon as I heard of this I hastened to his bedside. He recognized me, for he pressed my hand, but he was unable to speak to me. Gout, which had flown to the heart, was suffocating him. I had brought with me Doctor Gueneau de Mussy, one of the princes of science. I shall never forget the pa-

thetic accent with which the celebrated physician said to me, having drawn me aside,—

"Oh, sir, you are to be very unhappy. But nothing can be done, nothing more can be done. Your father is dying."

He died on Tuesday, August 29, 1871, at ten o'clock in the evening. Fifty years before, day for day, he had slept for the first time in this apartment, in the very room in which he breathed his last.

My father, as you have read, belonged to the Reformed Church, but he had brought my sister and myself up as Catholics, thinking it more seemly that his children should belong to the religion which predominates in France.

At my invitation a pastor came to the house of death to pray over the body of my illustrious and revered father, and accompanied his mortal remains to the cemetery.

And on this occasion a religious newspaper, "L'Univers"—joked. Yes, joked! At a time when the whole press, of all shades of opinion, was unanimous in expressions of regret, a writer in "L'Univers," who, it is true, had not the courage to sign an article which was as stupid as it was infamous, had the audacity to say,—

"One would like to know what a minister of the pure gospel can have found to say about Paul de Kock."

That is stupid, anonymous sir, because you,

who make a trade of religion, you ought to have known that a Protestant pastor, standing over a tomb, does not speak of the body which it contains, but of God, of a just and good God, to whom those who remain behind must go for comfort in their affliction.

It is infamous because nothing either in the life or in the work of my illustrious and revered father warranted you in doubting that good could be said of him in the tomb. His merits may be summed up as follows,—

"He was the most honest of men.

"He was the best of fathers.

"He was one of the most fertile, most charming of contemporary novelists, one of those, also, whose name will never die."

Paul de Kock is buried in the cemetery of Les Lilas, which was formerly the Romainville wood. My sister and I wished that our well-beloved father should rest in the country which was so dear to him. The Commune of Les Lilas insisted, as an honor, in taking upon itself the perpetual care of Paul de Kock's tomb, and we accepted this offer with gratitude, as a last and touching homage paid by the people to the people's great writer.

HENRY DE KOCK.

APPENDIX

Commune of Romainville

(*SEINE*)

TO

PAUL DE KOCK

Novelist

(*1793–1871*)

Monument authorized by presidential decree on the 28th of March, 1901.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY, M. WALDECK-ROUSSEAU,

Minister of the Interior and of Public Morals

AND

HIS EXCELLENCY, M. LEYGUES,

Minister of Public Instruction and the Fine Arts.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Messieurs.	Messieurs.
COUINET, Pres., Rue du Vieux Goulet.	BRACHET, René, 40 Rue de Paris.
GOURDON, Vice-Pres., 82 Rue de Paris.	CABOURG, 17 Rue Saint-Pierre.
SIMONOT, Trés., 27 Rue de Paris.	CHAUSSES, Felix, 54 Rue de Paris.
PAQUET, G., Trés.-Adj., Rue de Pantin.	CHAUSSES, Marcel, 45 Rue de Paris.
COURTIN, Secrétaire, 62 Rue de Bagnolet.	CLÉVY, 1 Rue Saint-Pierre.
BARGE, Secr.-Adj., 31 Rue Saint-Pierre.	CONTANT, Aux Trois-Communes.
BOIS, 9 Rue Saint-Germain.	DÉAN, 5 Rue de Paris.
BON, Aux Trois-Communes.	DORY, G. V., 5 Rue du Puits.
BOYER, Louis, Rue du Vieux Goulet.	DURAND, J., Sente des Gds.-Champs.
	LECOUTEUX, Ad., 10 Rue de Paris.
	MATHIEU, Arm., Chemin des Mares.
	NICOLAS, 10 Rue Abbe-Bourbon.
	VOLANT, Louis, 28 Rue Saint-Pierre.

COMMITTEE FOR THE ERECTION

OF A

MONUMENT TO PAUL DE KOCK

The Committee has the honor of inviting you to grace with your presence the ceremony of the inauguration of the monument of Paul de Kock, at Romainville, which will take place on Sunday, the 29th of September, 1901, at half-past two precisely, under the honorary direction of M. JULES CLARETIE, of the Academie Francaise.

THE COMMITTEE.

ADDRESS

Given by M. GOURDON, former Mayor of Romainville, Vice-President of the Committee for

THE INAUGURATION

OF THE

MONUMENT TO PAUL DE KOCK

AT ROMAINVILLE (Seine).

MR. MAYOR, GENTLEMEN: — I have the agreeable privilege, in the name of the Committee of the Monument of Paul de Kock, of presenting to you today, September 29, 1901, Mr. Mayor, Mr. Delegate of the Préfet de la Seine, as well as to the municipality, the square containing the statue of our celebrated novelist, as well as the dependencies, railings and fountain of the square, etc., etc.

The Committee has the honor of thanking M. le Préfet de la Seine for the great interest he has taken in our celebration in delegating M. Girod to represent him, than whom he could not have chosen a more amiable or distinguished man.

We again thank M. Jules Claretie, Academician, who has very willingly permitted us to use his name which has won such great literary distinction, and who has assisted us in our work, of which the aim was to honor the memory of the facetious Paul de Kock, historian of the manners of his epoch.

The Committee takes pleasure in thanking M. Albert Cim, vice-president of the Société des Gens de Lettres, for acting as the representative of M. Jules Claretie and the Société des Gens des Lettres, and in this capacity we convey to him our warmest thanks for the mission he has thus fulfilled towards us.

Our task is easy, for we have but to reiterate our thanks for the help we have received.

TO THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: — We also offer our most hearty thanks to the Conseil Géneral de la Seine, to the Municipal Council of the City of Paris for what they have done for Romainville.

And further, we thank those who have so cheerfully aided us by their subscriptions; for they were very numerous in the departments, and we had friends even in Algeria.

Finally, we offer our felicitations to all those who collaborated in the work: M. Descomps, sculptor; M. Viet, architect; M. Michaud, surveyor; and to those who wished to give greater distinction to our celebration and who have gratuitously furnished us the lighting of the Mairie, the square and the ball. This courtesy, which will be appreciated by all, is due to the East Parisian Tramway Company.

We again thank Messrs. Rouff & Co., publishers of the works of Paul de Kock, for the great publicity given by that firm to our work, to say nothing of their personal subscriptions.

To the entire press we express our gratitude for the kindly assistance it has rendered us under these circumstances.

Ladies, Gentlemen, my Friends: — The honor of raising this monument which you now see belongs, in its initiation, to M. Cousinet, the mayor, whom, I believe, under this radiant sun and on this day, which is so fine for the season and for the occasion, and in the presence of the numerous friends who have responded to our invitation, must experience great personal satisfaction at the complete success of our fête, and also in the fact that our generous subscriber, M. Osiris, who did not forget under these circumstances and on this day that it is necessary to think of those who suffer, and who, as the outcome of the invitation to be present at our inauguration, made a pretty gift in sending to the committee five hundred francs for the poor.

If there is a corporation which in this epoch of general grievances has no right to complain, it is the corporation of sculptors, statuarys, decorators, bronze-founders, and marble-cutters, etc., etc., for never, in any period of history, has the world seen so many monuments of celebrated men — on foot, on horseback, they will soon have them in balloons and in automobiles.

This pleasing momentary monomania has a practical result; it makes work and it also gives rise to speeches at inaugurations.

It teaches a little contemporary history to those who speak and to those who listen, that is another result; and further, inaugurations afford occupation to the brass bands and choral societies —because there are no inaugurations without speeches or without music.

That which we see is nothing, for the authorities are talking, because of the decaying of the trees and shrubs on the public promenades, of a plan, beginning with the Champs-Élysées, of replacing the avenues of trees with rows of statues of distinguished men who are forgotten or little known.

As you see, there is still some bread on the sculptor's bench.

Then, if you have a son hasten to send him to the École des Beaux-Arts (Sculpture Class); he has some chances of getting a small order. After that, you need not trouble yourself further, he will make his own way.

Paul de Kock merits a bust; he had none; we remedy that lack today.

When he was making his studies of grisettes and bourgeois, leaning on his elbows at his window looking on the Boulevard Saint-Martin, he little thought that one day at his dear Romainville they would be making a speech about him, and still less that he would have his bust — just the same as a minister. No, nothing of that kind entered his mind; for he was modest, and in 1812, he being then eighteen years old, when he wanted to get "The Child of My Wife" published, he could not find a publisher to take it.

It is true that since then the publishers have enriched themselves merely by re-publishing, in the French and in foreign languages, all his novels, and there are many of them; I have read the greater part of his works, but I have not read them all.

He could have done something other than to make people laugh at a time when everyone laughed, inasmuch as his father, a Dutch banker, who was guillotined in 1794, had left him at Passy, then a suburb of Paris, the means of making a fortune by following the paternal business; but he had the itch for writing; he

wrote, it was better that he did so, for he has left to us and to our descendants a picture of manners which has made him the Molière of the Parisian middle classes, of an epoch of which he so joyously traced silhouettes for us.

There is a proverb which says, "No man is a prophet in his own country," and you know one does not dispute a proverb which is sacred.

The proverb was true in regard to the romancist. Go, and you will see, as I have often seen myself in my travels in the provinces and abroad, everywhere you will find, and they will offer to you at the bookseller's, at the clubs, at the lending libraries, the complete works of Paul de Kock, in French or translated; — a million readers possess them.

There is certainly no French author, and above all no Romainville author, who is so well known, so well liked, by both old and young.

And wherefore? Because he has depicted — laughing the while good-humoredly, like a bourgeois in slippers — Parisian life as it was lived, the story of a special class, which is all and which is nothing.

He has not created types, he has chosen those which were around him; he has studied them from all sides; he has made pictures of them which are charming in their simplicity; without art and without preparation, he has written of what he has seen; and that is his special merit,— he was realistic without knowing it. He has written little unpretentious novels; he has exposed the follies of his time, and has left us some amusing documents that we may reconstruct that which we know but imperfectly. These are studies of manners. He might have been great; he lived in the period of romance and of fashion; and then, he might have been a brilliant dramatist in place of the good papa, the chaffing child of Paris that he was. He was the child of Paris; his circle of study was limited to the region which extended from the Boulevard du Temple to Montfermeil.

His dear wood at Romainville was the neighborhood where the principal scenes of his novels transpired, and one feels that there he lived — he was at home; they still think of him there as one whom they love or as one who loved them.

His field of observation was the old quarter of the Marais, the last refuge of a race which has disappeared, the bourgeoisie of 1830, of which he is the only historian.

When he made an excursion he always went to Romainville, where later on he came to dwell. He loved quietude; in him the phlegm of the Dutchman and the gayety of the Parisian were allied.

Yes, he was an inhabitant of Romainville; we ought to be proud of that. To make people laugh is always better than to make them cry; he has made people laugh and will make them laugh for a long time to come, because, as Rabelais says: "Laughter is wholesome, and an antidote for the spleen." This is why he is so popular, so well appreciated,— because he made people laugh; and this laughter is very Gallic, spontaneous, unaffected, natural, and emanates from the situations of daily life. It is French laughter, that of a good fellow making broad jokes, drinking his pint of wine, teasing Lisette, Margot and Suzon. He is a jolly fellow of a storyteller, and imitates, involuntarily and unconsciously, the charming storytellers of the century of Louis XIV and Louis XV, who tried to put on the shoes which Paul de Kock wore with so much ease; but with this difference, that, despite the liberty of speaking plain French, of calling a spade a spade, he has always, in all his novels, drawn a moral from that which has rejoiced and enlivened his reader; and the latter is surprised, not expecting such a conclusion, which adds charm to the story. No, he made no pretension to being a moralist, but he related what he saw and said what he thought.

No one has dissected, as he has, that charming doll, that flower of the workshop, which in his time was called the grisette, and the acme of whose good fortune then was to go,

attired in her little gown of Indian muslin and her linen cap, on Sundays to dance in the enclosure or ride a donkey at Romainville.

The grisette has disappeared from our social life; she has gone. Today when a girl has thrown her cap to the four winds she replaces it, a thing almost unknown in that time, by a bonnet of the best make.

As to the men, they have changed their coats, but they are still the same good fellows, devoid of malice, easily deceived, and contented.

He will, perhaps, be charged with being a too realistic observer of his times; man, whatever be the epoch, will always be the same.

The times are changed, and Béranger would no longer recognize his Lisette in the lady in her carriage,

The Romainville wood exists no longer, and departed also are the laughter and the song with which it once echoed. Paul de Kock, if he could return, would not recognize the paths where they sported so gayly.

The gamekeeper exists no longer, the donkeys are gone, the trees are fallen; even Paul de Kock's home has disappeared.

There is only a fort to be seen, and laughter has departed also. We no longer know how to laugh; we are ashamed to show our feelings; we are serious, we are morose, we no longer drink our native wine which gives rise to gayety and song. We have changed unhappily, perhaps by the planting of the American vine.

Laughter is necessary, nor does it prevent thought.

Paul de Kock, who made so many people laugh, died of grief because he had not gone, like so many others who had loved their dear country, towards that unknown bourne which men call death before he had seen his country ravished and his dear Romainville destroyed.

He thought; and, notwithstanding, he made people laugh,

The woods are fallen, the birds have taken their flight,—good-by to laughter and to song.

The works of Paul de Kock will not perish. He represents a school in which he is inimitable. He disseminated around him with a sweet cheerfulness, the happiest philosophy.

He consoled the poor, he showed the pleasures, the joys, the triumphs which belong to those who know how to content themselves with little. He did not envy the rich; he bore no grudge against the favorites of fortune.

A little sun, some flowers, a dozen friends, these were his pleasures.

He was sentimental![1]

His works have been translated into many languages. The great lady reads them, as well as the working woman. The poor, the sick, even, find them as cheerful as do the rich.

It is man alone who laughs; the lower animals weep, but they never laugh.

Ladies and gentleman, my friends: — Let us thank Paul de Kock once more for the pleasant hours which we have passed by means of his charming stories, where the French wit appears on every page. He has never wounded a single conviction.

He never had, like the authors of our days, the idea of mak-

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[1] MY SON'S KISS.

In the fair morning of life's sweet springtide,
  When love alone filled all my youthful heart;
A pretty woman's kiss was amplified
  Into supreme delight, a thing apart.
I had no thought that kindly Nature stored
  Amidst love's sweets a more exquisite one;
But oh, on rapture's wings my spirit soared,
  When thy fresh lips first kissed me, darling son.

Still in the age of pleasure and of love,
  My son takes up my constant thought and care;
A father's happiness I feel above
  The transitory love of women, fair
But fickle oft, and likely to betray
  Him whose own promises are lightly won.
But no suspicion can my heart dismay
  As thy pure lips kiss mine, my darling son.

ing or of sustaining a worn-out argument, under the pretext of a quintessence of ideas, or of debasing language in exposing and detailing obscenities of every kind, which pervert both the heart and the mind.

I like the novels of Paul de Kock much better. They have been read and will be read again and again. Nowhere in his works does one find the glorification of vice, an excuse for immorality, an incitement to debauchery.

The decadents are done with; we shall return, for a long time and invariably, to our author, to Paul de Kock. That which is good will always be good, and no one will ever proscribe, under the fallacious pretext of art or of symbolism, honest laughter, frank gayety, the loving heart, the open hand, which are the qualities of our race and which our ally appreciated so well when he said, "I shall come back to France where every one is so kind to me"; he knew us and he appreciated us.

Yes, ladies, gentlemen, my friends, let us ever remain and let us ever be entirely French, with our defects and our qualities, let us remain that which we are, and let us honor those who have known how to make this old Gallic wit understood from afar.

The pen has made more conquests than the sword, from the point of view of uniting people and ideas.

Of old, our ancestors sang and drank; they loved, and France was great and strong. Let us all ever be French, and surely the sun which has been hidden will shine anew on our dear country.

Yes, we have done well to raise a monument to Paul de Kock. Though unrecognized, though he did useful work in his sphere by which we profit, with laughter and rejoicing he has made our tongue known in distant lands.

To read him advantageously, foreigners have learned French, which they never would have done had he not written to provoke laughter.

People have laughed, and they still laugh, no matter what part of the world they inhabit. Paul de Kock is accused of being licentious, and assuredly his works were not designed to be

offered as prizes in schools for young ladies; but if you will read Joinville, Brantôme, Montaigne, and other weighty and serious writers, you will find that, as to that, Paul de Kock is insipid.

Paul de Kock has become an ambassador of Gallic wit and of the middle-class Parisians in Europe; this claim has its value if he had not the more useful and more French one of having caused laughter, without malice, throughout a whole generation. It is true that that which is useful is not always appreciated, but the time must come when the world perceives that it has forgotten to recompense one who deserved recognition.

Thanks to you, M. Osiris, Paul de Kock has his monument, you whose ideas are large and generous and are immediately put into execution; you, from whom participation in a useful work of any kind, whatsoever, is never asked in vain, and who have already done so much for France; your merit will, I am sure, be recognized by all, and they will associate you with those they call their benefactors, the highest and noblest title that can be bestowed upon you for the good which you have already done, and that which you will do for a long time to come, I hope, with all my heart.

When laughter ceases, France will be dead, and we must, as Beaumarchais said, hasten to laugh in speaking of the wicked, for fear of shedding tears for them.

Ladies, gentlemen, my friends: — You will bow in passing this bust, as to the image of an old friend who smiles at you and says,—

Laugh, be gay and good.

Now I must thank the inhabitants of Romainville for the good grace with which they responded to the request for subscriptions for the ball, a subscription which has exceeded all expectation; the big sous came tumbling in, and we shall dance until daylight.

I beg to be excused for the familiar words of which I availed myself in order to obtain the money from the papas; you see by the results that I was justified in the means.

My girls and boys are pleased, I hope, and they cannot say that they no longer have any dancing.

Yes, we'll dance, we'll sing, and after we have sung, we will laugh; and then the fête will be Gallic, and Paul de Kock will approve of us. B. GOURDON.

SPEECH

By M. RENÉ LUGUET, dean of the Artistes Dramatiques.

LADIES, GENTLEMEN: — The papers have apprised us of the fact that the Municipal Council of Romainville has organized a grand public ceremony to consecrate by a work of art the celebrity of Paul de Kock, the great popular charmer, whose genial muse made the Palais-Royal the theatre of laughter and frank gayety.

As I had formerly been one of the interpreters of this joyous repertoire, I naturally wished to take part in this interesting ceremony and to manifest, by a few words, my deep admiration for this greatly admired and deeply deplored dramatic author.

This is what explains my presence at this fête and this is what makes me hope for your kind indulgence during my little chat.

After lowering the curtain on my long theatrical career, I became the dean of the Artistes of Paris. But my great age has not effaced my memories, and I remember that towards 1846 Paul de Kock brought to the Palais-Royal a merry vaudeville which was entitled the "Garde-Malade." I was designated for the rôle of the young invalid, and I delivered all the comical reiterations of his whims and fancies in the company of my comrade Grassot, who represented an old woman whose business it was to apply leeches.

The piece had an enormous success; it ran twice for a hundred nights, and for a very long time we played it and replayed it at all the theatres of Paris. One day it was inscribed on the program of the Odéon for a free spectacle on the occasion of the National Fête.

The pit was invaded by the students of the École de Droit

and the École de Medecine. The auditorium was completely filled.

As we were dealing only with spectators who asked nothing better than to be amused after the tragedy, my comrade Grassot gave himself up to pranks and absurdities which evoked tempestuous shouts of laughter.

A spectator in the back of the pit said, as he rubbed his hands, "By Jove! They're laughing with a vengeance down yonder."

But a day came when there was no laughter, when we had to weep over the disasters which had befallen France. That was in 1871. Our valiant army had returned to us utterly disabled, with flags in tatters, and with trumpets silenced. It had trod — from the Rhine to the Loire,— the bloody calvary of our hundred years of glory.

At length after many years (we have not forgotten them), tranquillity is restored — a long peace has allowed the French race to increase and multiply — the army is reorganized; all our young boys have become men who will guard our frontiers.

But, while waiting until the reason of the people shall reprobate the "casus belli" and its horrible consequences, we will mark in white this happy day, and we will go back to Paris with glad hearts, saying, in the words of the old adage,— "All's well that ends well."

RÉNÉ LUGUET.

Letter addressed to M. GOURDON, vice-president of the committee on the statue of Paul de Kock.

PARIS, Oct. 1, 1901.

What a good whiff of air I have just breathed at Romainville! What a renewal of youth and of frank gayety, what good people I saw there.

All these sunny people greeting the Roger Bontemps of 82 Rue de Paris and the solid brigadier whose breast concealed anvils instead of lungs.

I passed twenty-four hours there, yielding to a charm which

the new generation ignores, and which the good books tell us about.

It was in 1871 that Paul de Kock left us for the mysterious beyond, carrying with him the gay laughter which yesterday returned to ripple around the monument you have erected in remembrance of this good Frenchman, whose charm was so great and who is so deeply deplored.

I owe to you one of the most charming days of my life, one in which there is no dark spot; nor are my thanks adequate for the pleasure and hospitality you so graciously bestowed upon me.

I have set myself to work and I have ransacked among my poor lucubrations, and while awaiting the story of the "Grand Murier," which you will soon receive, I send to you some whimsical verses which I have scrawled from time to time.

Accept them as the humble expression of a great sympathy, and kindly convey my respects to your amiable lady, whom I saw so assiduously employed in preparing a layette for the little creature who is about to come into the world.

Hoping you will both believe in the sincerity of my good wishes,

RÉNÉ LUGUET.

To M. Claretie, member of l'Academie Française, Paris.

HONORED SIR: — I am personally grateful to you for having at my solicitation so kindly accepted the honorary direction of the fête at the inauguration of Paul de Kock's monument at Romainville.

Your name must have brought us good fortune, for we had a summer day and gathered in our little locality from twelve to fourteen thousand people, an almost incredible thing at this time of year.

They laughed and sang and danced until six o'clock in the morning. It was curious to see all these people arrive at this spot by way of Noisy-le-Sec, Bagnolet, Montreuil and Les Lilas, laughing and singing.

Romainville has never had a similar fête.

You should certainly be a happy man, since the shadow of your name sufficed to make our fête successful.

I thank you, my dear sir, in the name of my colleagues of the committee, who join me in expressing our gratitude.

Accept, honored sir, the assurance of my respectful regards.

GOURDON, *Ex-Mayor.*

Romainville, October 1, 1901.

To M. Osiris.

SIR AND HONORED BENEFACTOR:— I make it my duty to send you fifty copies of this address which I had the pleasure of giving, thanks to your liberality, at Romainville on Sunday, September 29, 1901, on the occasion of the dedication of the square and of the monument.

I cannot thank you enough personally for the good you have done in giving to the children, the mothers of families and the working people a spot where they may find relaxation and enjoy at the same time the splendid panorama which is spread out before them.

For your part, monsieur, you must be delighted in the depths of your heart at having your idea so well realized.

The inhabitants of Romainville can never forget what you have done for them, and be assured they will retain you in their memories as one of their benefactors; they are undemonstrative, but they are a grateful population, who know how to recognize those who have bestowed benefits upon them.

I thank you once more, monsieur, and beg you to accept the lively gratitude of the committee and of

Yours respectfully,

GOURDON.

Romainville, October 1, 1901.

To M. Albert Cim, Vice-President of the Société des Gens de Lettres, Paris.

DEAR SIR:— We thank you for the good words you have said for our old friend. M. Jules Claretie, in his extremely kind

letter, approves us for having done justice to a writer who sought neither renown nor shameful notoriety by pornography.

Paul de Kock cannot be adjudged guilty for having told in a realistic manner what he had seen. If anything shocks in his stories, one can only refer it to the manners and to the time which he has so faithfully depicted.

Who could be so prudish as to presume to throw a stone at him for having related what he saw. Let us acknowledge respectfully and cheerfully the faults of our ancestors.

We are aware, monsieur, that your independence and your aversion to the narrow prejudices of our epoch have enabled you to place a true value on events and actions from the historical point of view of his time.

Thanks for these truths, and for the essay in which you have so fully made them understood by all; a task which not every one could have accomplished.

The achievement of the inauguration of Paul de Kock's monument was not an easy matter, owing to the prejudices existing against that novelist, which have caused him to be viewed only as the accredited representative of the laughter and the gayety of a departed epoch.

I have permitted myself — somewhat presumptuous temerity on my part, being neither a journalist nor a literary man — to wish to re-agitate this matter; to make a campaign to enlighten people in regard to the different aspects of the special talent of a character too lightly appreciated by people who thought of nothing but laughing, but who did not perceive that beside them was a man who evoked spontaneous and hearty laughter.

I resolutely, and at the risk of burning myself, took hold of the stove handle, and I tried, in my turn, to evoke laughter. I saw that I had struck the right note, inasmuch as they laughed and applauded at different times; besides, several journals have made mention of it, among others the "Depêche Republicaine" of Besançon (Doubs) said, "M. Gourdon was warmly applauded."

So that is an assured fact! So much the better. Words take to themselves wings, but what is written remains, thank God! What will be said later of what has been written and drawn today! The novels of Paul de Kock are nothing but marshmallow flowers.

Accept, dear sir, in my name and that of the committee, our grateful thanks. B. Gourdon.

Romainville, October 1, 1901.

NOTES ON PAUL DE KOCK

Monsieur and Madame de Kock had lived in the Romainville wood some time before 1838. They were proprietors there, and paid an annual tax, according to the valuation of real estate at that time, of fr. 21.75.

Madame Paul de Kock, née Louhant (Marguerite) was born at Danveilliers near Verdun (Meurthe), and died at the age of forty-four years, Sept. 23, 1842, in the wood at Romainville.

The remains were exhumed June 15, 1897, and buried with her husband's ashes at the cemetery of Les Lilas, after resting for fifty-five years in the cemetery at Romainville.

Strange to say, the monument of Paul de Kock is placed directly over the spot where his wife was first buried, in the part set off from the actual cemetery, towards 1873.

Charles Paul de Kock was born at Passy, May 21, 1793, and died at Paris, Aug. 21, 1871, at the age of seventy-eight years, at his home, 18 Boulevard Saint-Martin.

His remains were deposited in the Belleville cemetery (Paris), and were exhumed on the 16th of September, the same year, to be buried in the cemetery at Les Lilas (Seine).

Henry de Kock, son of the deceased, conducted the funeral obsequies. The pastor who accompanied him to the cemetery delivered a touching discourse, after which M. de Najac dwelt on the remarkable talent for observation and the Rabelaisian qualities of Paul de Kock.

Caroline Amélie, daughter of Paul de Kock, married to

M. L. de Marceuil, died February 13, 1885, at Paris, Boulevard Voltaire, and rests a few feet from her father.

Henry de Kock, his son,[1] died April 14, 1892, and was buried at Limay (Seine-et-Oise).

As a meeting of the municipal council at Les Lilas, November 9, 1874, the sum of ten francs annually was voted as a perpetual concession for the care of Paul de Kock's grave.

Many persons come to Romainville inquiring as to the whereabouts of Paul de Kock's house, and are told that one fine morning he found himself in a new commune without having changed his dwelling, which was the result of an imperial decree of October 5, 1867, when a part of the territory of Romainville was annexed to create the commune of Les Lilas, and he found himself again in the midst of the lilacs, his favorite flowers.

Paul de Kock from 1867 to 1871 published nothing.

His house was completely demolished four years ago. [This was written in 1901. Tr.]

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[1] Puppet of Fate, which by a freakish turn,
In one fell instant may our plans destroy,
I'll murmur not, though fortune doth me spurn,
And take my all, if she but spare my boy.
Contented then, I will my way pursue,
If I can say, "Near him my course is run,"
And close my eyes and breathe my last adieu,
Happy in thy last kiss, my darling son.